



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>




3 3433 07609026 9



YOUR CHILD AND MINE

ANNE WARNER

Home - 1-800-451-1234



AUG 7★ Anon.

HOME ... TS

F...

20

21

22

23

YOUR CHILD AND MINE

Books by Anne Warner

A WOMAN'S WILL	1904
SUSAN CLEGG AND HER FRIEND MRS. LATHROP	1904
THE REJUVENATION OF AUNT MARY . .	1905
SUSAN CLEGG AND HER NEIGHBOR'S AFFAIRS	1906
SUSAN CLEGG AND A MAN IN THE HOUSE .	1907
AN ORIGINAL GENTLEMAN	1908
IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY	1909
YOUR CHILD AND MINE	1909

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

"

"



"‘She is n’t your muvver,’ he said, in desperate pleading."

FRONTISPIECE. See page 230

YOUR CHILD AND MINE

BY

ANNIE WARNER

AUTHOR OF "THE RECOVERY OF ANNE MARY"

"SUSSE CLOTH AND HER FRIEND, MISS LITTLETON"

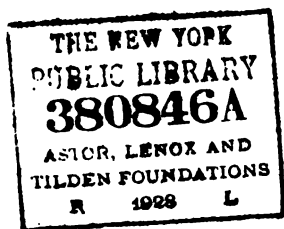
"IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1909



Copyright, 1909,

By LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

Copyright, 1906, by The Century Co.; 1906, 1908, by The Housekeeper Corporation; 1908, by The Ridgway Company; 1908, by C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd.; 1908, by The Curtis Publishing Company; 1909, by J. B. Lippincott Company.

All rights reserved

Published September, 1909

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

WORLD WAR
LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY

PREFACE

(*For children only*)

DEAR READER (hoping that you are *very* small):

Here are a great many stories which children — many children — have dearly loved, and which I am hoping will reach the hearts of many more. It is very hard to reach the hearts of children because their stories are chosen for them (as a general rule) by unsympathetic grown-ups. Those grown-ups stand like a barrier between you and me, and I do not know just how we can batter them away and reach one another unless we get desperate. I confess that I am ready to be very desperate, and if you will help me I think that we may find a way to become friends for life. If somebody can marry somebody in the end, any editor will print a story like that of little Gerard and his perfect understanding of “the mysterious man”; and if there is a man who has made a great deal of money, like the man in “The One Parting in the Clouds,” he will be allowed to show you how hard life is for the boy who may sit at the next desk in school, but who will never have in his heart a certain something which you were born with, and which,

if you are a fine character, will make you very considerate of his deficiencies. There are no lessons in these stories which your own grown-ups do not need as much as you do, but there are a good many which they never seem to think of allowing you to share with them. Little Cornwallis, struggling with his nicknames and the problem of his mother's disappearance, is a sermon for the whole family together; but even as they feel for little Cornwallis mothers forget how he suffers from being kept in the dark as to that mystery which they understand perfectly.

There are all sorts of true people and true pictures in these pages. The Easter Rabbit is every word true, and I shopped myself with the Christmas Devotee. As for the fairy stories, I believe in fairies firmly. I should like to write a whole set of stories about them, telling my own observations and personal experiences, but no editor would ever believe that I knew anything of the subject. Prince — who was a real dog — they do not credit at all, and the dear old Witch with her two lovely Black Cats they would have none of.

So I have gathered together all the tales that have been printed because they were suitable for your aunts and uncles, and all the others that have been addressed especially to you, and packed them together in one good, stout cloth cover, and here they are. If you succeed in getting them, and if you like them, I hope that you will impress the fact on the family.

Tell them that you *do* understand why you love "Le Petit" when you read how he sat on the floor and clasped his Christmas toys, and that your heart can echo Rex' when he wanted to give back the pony. We are never too little or too young to grasp at the truly good things of life. Even if the floor be only earthen and life very humble, we can still clasp lovely things—not to our bosoms, but *in* them—in our very hearts. I hope that much that is in my heart may flow to you through these pages. Every word was written with love for you. The other day, kneeling in the great cathedral at Antwerp, I was praying to be very good to my children when it suddenly came to me that the better and bigger prayer would be to ask to be very good to *every* child who came my way. I am making that prayer again now for you who read this, hoping that if you are seeking some little word of help, some little sign of secret sympathy, you may find it here. If you find it, you may feel quite sure that it was written especially for *you*, just as these words are written especially for *you*. Never forget that, nor what an important person you are, nor how vitally necessary it is to the whole world that your life be a good and happy one. You are far more important than any grown-up, for it is pretty well settled that he or she is thus-and-so, but there is no telling what you have locked up in your future, and it is because you are so much wiser than most of us

guess, that I have offered you a book like this. It is not the usual child's book, but it is a book of stories beloved by all the children whom I know.

Now I kneel by the pond, put my little boat on the sparkling water, and give it a shove.

Now the wind is catching the little sail and it is tipping and dipping and setting forth.

Are you watching for it? Are you waiting for it? I stand here and you there and the book — I mean the boat — is going — going — going.

There — now you have it! It is yours. I'm so glad. I do hope that you'll like it.

With lots of love,

ANNE WARNER.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS	1
THE PRACTICAL CARE OF A FAIRY	36
THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS	46
A CHRISTMAS DEVOTEE	73
WHO IS SHE?	82
A TRUE WOMAN	87
THE MYSTERIOUS MAN	106
"LE PETIT"	128
THE CAPTAIN'S CHARM	139
THE OLD WITCH AND THE BLACK CATS	151
HIMSELF REBORN	158
LITTLE SISTER AND BABY	172
AN OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOL	189
THE GERMAN EASTER AND THE EASTER RABBIT	201
TRADING HIS MOTHER	216
THE VERY BOTTOM OF HER PURSE	233
THE STEINHARD PRIDE	248
THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOG	263
HIS MAJESTY AND THE FAIRIES	279
THE CLOSING OF SANTA CLAUS' DOOR	291
THE SOUL OF A TREE	299

ILLUSTRATIONS

"‘She is n’t your muvver,’ he said, in desperate pleading”	
Drawn by Paul Julien Meylan	Frontispiece
	PAGE
“‘Mamma!’ he cried loudly, ‘it’s your baby!’” . . .	23
Drawn by Ethel Farnsworth	
“‘Don’t you know that boy that always comes home with me?’”	52
Drawn by A. E. Jackson	
“He did n’t know any of them, and he did n’t dance” .	58
Drawn by A. E. Jackson	
“They spent the whole day in the fields and woods” .	117
Drawn by A. Ball	
“Courtney stood still while the three lumps of sugar were being eaten”	164
Drawn by W. H. Margedson	
“The doctor picked the baby up and put her straight into her grandfather’s arms”	261
Drawn by Cyrus Fosmire	
“‘Brian,’ she said, ‘it’s rather a fine thing to be an English gentleman’”	295
Drawn by E. Tattersal	

YOUR CHILD AND MINE

...

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS

CORNWALLIS, JR., was six years old. His full name was Cornwallis General, a manner of conjunction which any reader will admit to be most trying. It was so trying, in fact, that when the mother of Cornwallis had — at a period antedating my story by about eight years — first met the man named General, she had remarked to her bosom friend that *there* was one man whom she *never* under *any* circumstances should even *dream* of marrying, because of their two names.

But she had changed her mind and married the man a year after — a way that young ladies have of doing — and young Cornwallis General had appeared later and taken the burden of the inevitable at the baptismal font. Young Cornwallis did n't mind being the bearer of his reversed title, though; *his* trials in regard to nomenclature were of quite another sort; it was not because his name

2 YOUR CHILD AND MINE

savored of too much and too unique a dignity that he rebelled — it was because he was almost altogether denied the use of it.

Young Cornwallis was a person of great distinction; at two he had become an individual with one paramount object in life, — not to be treated longer as a baby. It is difficult at two years of age to overawe one's superiors, and Cornwallis had a hard time, even though he made it an invariable rule to refer to himself only as either "he" or "Tunwattis." "Tunwattis" merged into "Tornwally" a year later, and when he was four he pronounced every syllable with an emphasis that should have shamed his father, who said "Major Trot," his nurse, who called him "Toddy Butterball," his grandmother, who cried out "Oh, my itty Blessin," whenever she saw him, and his grandfather, who would stop anywhere on the avenue and inquire, with a cheerful smile that added insult to injury, "Well, how's Skiddy-winks to-day?" But although all these were bad — very bad — it was his mother, his dear, sweet mother, who was the very most awfully cruel person of them all, for in all the interminably long existence that they had shared together, she had never yet mentioned him by any other name than the one which he detested worst of all — "Baby."

Oh, how he did hate to be called "Baby" — his small teeth and hands used to clinch, in spite of himself, whenever he heard it. He had hoped that

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 3

when his curls went she would stop — but she did n't. Then he hoped that when he graduated into knickerbockers she would stop — but she did n't. And then he thought that when Santa Claus brought another baby she would surely stop — but — but that is the story.

I must digress here to explain that Grandpapa and Grandmamma Cornwallis lived away out on the avenue in a huge, white marble house, and had three motors, a garden, chickens in the latticed yard, and ever so many maids and men, and that Papa and Mamma General lived much nearer town and just had Norah and Nellie and Mrs. Tray (who came and went spasmodically) and Lotty, who cooked, and the runabout, and Star to drive. There was a telephone between the two houses, and a system of inter-domestic dining and lunching far too intricate for me to elucidate, and Grandpapa always came at six o'clock and took Mamma out in the motor, and Cornwallis went regularly on his velocipede to see Grandmamma every day at ten in the morning, and again after his nap at half-past three in the afternoon. It was during one of the latter calls that his grandmother asked him his ideas as to Santa Claus's bringing a baby. Cornwallis's face fairly radiated at the suggestion; not because he wanted a baby, but because he thought that the baby would surely absorb all the nicknames.

"You would love a baby dearly, would n't you, you Sugar-plum, you?" said Grandmamma.

Cornwallis's radiance turned dark. "No one would call *me* 'Baby' then," he said, coldly, not quite liking to be so pointed as to mention the offensive "Sugar-plum" to a grandmother whose cook made cakes full of them.

Grandmother laughed a great deal over this, and went at once and wrote it down on her pad, so as to be sure to remember to tell Grandpapa how clever their only grandson was becoming. Then she ordered out the biggest automobile—the dark-blue one—and took Cornwallis and Nellie and the velocipede home in state.

When they all three went up to Mamma's room they found Mamma rocking idly and Mrs. Tray trimming a clothes-basket. Grandmamma whispered Cornwallis's brilliant remark in Mamma's ear, while that young man walked around Mrs. Tray and her task. It was quite a novelty to him, for he had never seen such a clothes-basket before. It was not only that they had quilted the inside with pink silk, but Mrs. Tray was sewing a great flounce of the same silk around the outside, and draping white lace and big knots of ribbon over that.

"Well, Babykin," said Mamma, smiling, and holding out her hand to the small boy whose face was so full of curiosity, "what do you think of it?"

Cornwallis ignored the hand, knowing that it

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 5

would drag him to a long and smothering kissing-siege.

"I suppose that it is for your dresses," he said.

"Not so," said Mrs. Tray, threading her needle with wonderful ease, "this is a baby-catcher."

"A baby-catcher!" repeated Cornwallis.

"Exactly so," said Mrs. Tray. "All you have to do is to set this basket by the chimney every night when you go to bed, and some fine morning you'll find a baby in it."

"Do you believe that?" Cornwallis asked, turning to his grandmother.

"Of course I do, Master Snips," said his grandmother.

Cornwallis winced slightly and went to his mother.

"Do you believe it?" he asked her.

"Of course — of course," she cried laughing. And then he found to his anguish that he had gone too near, for she had him pulled tight up against her chair and was kissing him ferociously and saying, "But no matter how many other babies come, darling, you'll always be *my* baby, my first, my dearest, my —"

Just there he managed to free himself, and with a red face and much-tumbled hair, resumed his examination of the basket.

"When will it be done?" he asked Mrs. Tray.

"To-night," replied Mrs. Tray, sewing very fast.

"We will set it to-night, then," promulgated

Cornwallis, and Grandmamma ran to Mamma's desk and made a note on an envelope so that she would not forget to repeat that clever speech to Grandpapa, either.

And so that night the baby-catcher was carefully baited with a little pillow and a love of a quilt, and set by the fireplace to snap up any errant baby.

The night was very short, like most of Cornwallis's nights, but when he woke he was wild to see if he had caught a baby. He tore off to his mother's room at once, and found things most painfully as usual. His mother was in bed, his father was shaving in his dressing-room, the basket was as pink and as empty as on the night before.

"Well, Tom Thumb," said his father, pleasantly.

"Tum into bed wiz me," said his mother.

"No, thank you," said Cornwallis, with great stress upon the lofty politeness of his diction. "Nellie must be waiting to bath me."

And he left his parents and their drivel in disgust.

After breakfast his father wanted to take him down to the office with him.

"You can ride back with Peter," he said.

"No, thank you," said Cornwallis. "I think that I will play in my mother's room and watch the basket."

"Oh, you 'd better come on with me, Captain Jinks," urged his father.

(Captain Jinks!)

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 7

"I don't want the baby alone with Peter; suppose the horse runs away," said his mother.

(The baby!)

"But I don't want the little one to bother you," said his father.

(The little one!)

"He is n't going to bother any one," said Mrs. Tray. "I'll look out for Buster Brown."

(Buster Brown!)

So his father went away, leaving Cornwallis with tears of real rage in his eyes at the way they all made a fool of him.

Twenty minutes later Nellie came in and took him off to see Grandmamma. They had n't gotten a block away from home before they met Grandmamma going down town in the motor with Grandpapa, and they were taken prisoner, velocipede and all, and carried right along. Grandmamma insisted on Cornwallis's sitting in between them for safety's sake, and kept her arm around him at that, and Grandpapa said:

"Well, Snoddy-boggins, how goes it?"

Cornwallis stood it as best he could, but the arm around him was most humiliating.

"Now, Skeezihs," said Grandpapa, presently, "have you forgotten what I told you about this car yesterday?"

"No, sir," said Cornwallis.

"What is the name?"

"It's a —" Cornwallis hesitated, "— it's a Fearless Kerosene," he announced triumphantly.

"Oh, give me a pencil, quick — I *must* write that right down," squealed Grandmamma, and as no one else had a pencil, they had to stop while the chauffeur lent her his.

"You know, he really is *too* bright," she whispered audibly to Grandpapa, and Grandpapa gave him a dollar and called him "Tiddledy-winks" in commendation.

They took a long drive in the country later and had lunch at the Race Club, and then when they went home Cornwallis was so dead with sleep that he did not resist when his grandmother called him "Piggy-wiggy" and Nellie carried him upstairs. But he did not forget to set the basket out again when he went to bed that night, and the next morning his disappointment was again keen when he found that no baby had been trapped.

"Santa Claus does n't come in the summer, anyhow," he said, wrathfully, to Nellie.

"Quite right, Tommy Tucker," said Mrs. Tray.

Cornwallis could have slapped her.

The next afternoon the baby came — when the basket was n't set out at all!

Cornwallis was up at Grandmamma's, adjusting a marvelous new railway system all over the billiard-room rug, when Grandpapa marched in, looking uncommonly beaming, even for him, and said:

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 9

"Hooray, Snooks, there's another girl in the family!"

If there was one epithet more especially and superlatively detestable to Cornwallis's ears than any other, it was "Snooks"; but he swallowed his wrath and rose, with a locomotive in one hand and its tender in the other, to repeat:

"Another girl, Grandpapa?"

"Yes; you've got a little sister."

"But I'm not a girl," said Cornwallis, indignantly.

"Your mother is, though, is n't she, young Winkum-Wankum?" replied Grandfather. "Come on; you and I are invited to go and have a look at the baby."

Cornwallis's spirit suddenly turned to joy indescribable. "The baby" — here she was, the individual who would get all the names now. Oh, bliss! Oh, ecstasy!

"What shall you call her, Grandpapa?" Cornwallis asked, ravenous to see whether he was to be that instant quit of "Skiddy-winks" forever henceforth.

"For her mother, Skiddy-winks, for her mother, of course," said Grandpapa, and then he snatched him up in his arms and called him "Snooks" and "Snoddy-boggins" all the way to the motor.

They fairly flew down the avenue, and Norah was in the drawing-room window watching for them. Cornwallis wondered what could be up when Norah was watching for them from the drawing-room

window. Papa must have been watching, too, for he opened the door before Norah could get to it, and the first thing he said was:

"Eyes just like Elaine's," which seemed silly to Cornwallis, but not so silly as the way Grandpapa sat down at once and hid his face in his handkerchief.

"Well, Johnny Jump-up," said Papa to Cornwallis then, "the fairies have been pretty good to us all to-day — do you know it?"

"They told me there's a baby come," said Cornwallis, wondering what he should be called next.

Grandpapa revived just then, put up his handkerchief, and said:

"I suppose the Chipmunk and I will be allowed a peep."

Cornwallis looked at his grandparent with displeasure unutterable at this, but Papa was saying:

"Come right up," and leading the way to the staircase, where they found Nellie standing, whispering: "Sh-h-h!"

They went softly up, and at the turning they found Grandmamma, also saying, "Sh-h-h!" and with a scratch-block all ready to perpetuate Cornwallis's first remark after seeing the baby — only she had forgotten the pencil again.

"In here," said Grandmamma, and they all went into the corner room. "Wait here," added Grandmamma very importantly, and slipped away.

"Of course she will be called Elaine?" said

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 11

Grandpapa, suddenly getting out his pocket-handkerchief again.

"Well, I should say so," said Papa, and then he suddenly and irrelevantly exclaimed, "What do you say, Paws-and-Claws?" to Cornwallis.

Cornwallis felt fairly blue over the downfall of his recent hopes, and was preparing to go and look out of the window, when Grandmamma suddenly entered and said, "Sh-h-h!" worse than ever.

Right behind her was Mrs. Tray with the pink clothes-basket in her hands. She put it on the big divan, and Papa took Cornwallis up just as if he *were* another baby, and Grandpapa and Grandmamma took hold of hands as if they were children, too, and every one gathered around the basket.

Mrs. Tray lifted a veil, and a quilt, and a shawl, and another thing, and turned back the corner of something else, and Cornwallis, looking close, saw a little round, dark head and a little pink fist, and then — why, then Mrs. Tray began to cover it over again, and the next minute she was gone, baby, basket, and all.

"A very nice little baby!" said Grandpapa, emphatically.

Papa tossed Cornwallis down on the divan and began to tousle him in a fearfully foolish manner.

"Sh-h-h!" said Grandmamma.

"Well, Major Trot, what did *you* think of her?" Papa asked.

"That's it," said Grandpapa; "what does Puss-in-Boots think?"

Grandmamma began to feel for the pencil that should be with the scratch-block.

But Cornwallis said not a word. He was disappointed and outraged. The baby had come when he was n't prepared, had relieved him of none of the awful odium and ignominy to which he was continually subjected, and appeared most unpromising as a social proposition.

Escaping out of the clutches of his fond relatives, Cornwallis fled the room.

That evening, a wonder far greater than the coming of any mere baby took place in Cornwallis's existence, — he went to Grandpapa's to sleep! He had never slept outside of his papa's house before — except at the cottage by the sea which Papa bought some summers — and so he was all excitement when Nellie told him. They had asked Nellie to come, too; Grandmamma was going to let them have the room next to the billiard-room. It was most pleasantly important to pack up, and bundle the velocipede into the tonneau of the Fearless Kerosene, and Nellie liked it, too. Grandpapa and Grandmamma went home at the same time, and Grandmamma's Nellie helped Cornwallis's Nellie to unpack, and called Cornwallis "Lambie" whenever she tripped over him in so doing. By nine o'clock he was all in bed, and Grandmamma came in and felt of his

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 13

feet, and Grandpapa came in and asked him how more track and another switch would suit him in the morning, and if it was worth saying "Peter Piper" for. It was one of Grandpapa's favorite bargains with Cornwallis, this trading new toys for the recitation of "Peter Piper," but Grandmamma interfered and said it might give her Sweetest Sugarplum brain fever if he recited "Peter Piper" at that hour; so they each kissed him twice, and after cautioning Nellie about draughts, matches, extra covering, and other matters of which Nellie, at thirty-five, was presumably ignorant, they went away.

The next day, the next, and the next were one halcyon dream of undiluted bliss to Cornwallis. He almost forgot his trials in the avalanche of his joys. Tracks, switches, elevators, dump-cars; his Nellie and Grandmamma's Nellie both to help operate them all day long; convenient lunches of gingerbread and milk and apples forever on tap. Grandmamma was away a good deal; Grandpapa, too; his father and mother he never saw; the baby he almost forgot. The realities of life were the railroad and the fascination of sending the little trains careering around the track, the opening and shutting of the wee signals, and the hoisting and lowering of freight before the elevators.

When Sunday came, Papa appeared suddenly in the door of the billiard-room, nodded to Cornwallis

without saying anything — and went away again. This was such unprecedented behavior on the part of his father that Cornwallis abandoned a sort of stoppage from overloaded traffic which he was just then engaged in disentangling, and hurried after him.

But he was gone!

The next day there was a great bustle, and Grandmamma's Nellie and his Nellie conversed mainly in whispers. Strange people came and went, new curtains were put up somewhere, furniture was moved, and then about four o'clock in the afternoon Mrs. Tray and the baby arrived to visit Grandmamma also. They had the lovely pink and white bedrooms and bath right opposite Grandmamma's own rooms, and Cornwallis went down to have a second look at his sister. There seemed to him a great change of sentiment in regard to the baby, no one manifesting any particular enthusiasm over her now.

"I suppose that my mother will come to-morrow," he said, half in question, to Mrs. Tray.

But Mrs. Tray only murmured something inaudible in reply.

His mother did not come on the morrow, nor on the next day, nor all the week. When Sunday came again, Cornwallis went to his grandmother, whom he found sitting in her room, looking out of the window.

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 15

"I'm about ready to go back to my own house," he announced, abruptly.

Grandmamma turned her head and looked at him as if he were a fly or any other very little thing.

"Yes, yes, Pettie, run away," she said, not unkindly, but as if he did n't matter much, and turned to the window again.

Cornwallis had never had any one treat him like this before; he went up to his grandmother's side and stood at her knee, and looked up in her face.

"What do you mean, Grandmamma?" he asked in a kind but slightly severe tone. His grandmother contorted her features most singularly.

"Are you going to sneeze?" he asked with curiosity.

Then she rose quickly, took him by the hand, led him out into the hall and across into the baby's room, and abandoned him without one word. He would have feared that his one and only grandmother had gone suddenly out of her senses, had it not been for Mrs. Tray and the baby. Mrs. Tray and the baby were sufficiently interesting at that minute to divert any one's mind from anything under the sun. Mrs. Tray was sitting on a low chair before the open grate, and in front of her was something like the stool Nellie carried down by the water at the sea, only the part which held Nellie up was gone. They had put a kind of bath-tub in there, and in that funny

bath-tub was the baby, her little ball of a black head held up by Mrs. Tray's hand.

Cornwallis stood and grinned foolishly at the sight.

"Well, Hop-o'-my-Thumb," said Mrs. Tray, "can you think that I held you just this same way six long years back?"

"She looks so silly," said Cornwallis.

Mrs. Tray laughed, and just as she laughed she scooped the whole little bit of a dripping, wiggling sister up in her two hands, and rolled her up out of sight, — completely out of sight.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Cornwallis.

And just then Nellie appeared in the door and told him that there were two white goats and a wagon down on the back lawn, and if he liked them — Cornwallis forgot his sister as easily as he had forgotten his grandmother just previously, and he and Nellie rushed away.

The days went on and on. The baby cried a great deal. Grandpapa became very silent. Grandmamma he rarely saw, Papa almost never. He and Nellie went to matinées and dime museums galore, the gardener made him a garden, he had rabbits bought for him, white mice, too; also a squirrel. Life was apparently one orgy of bewildering novelties.

Then the baby began to be cunning. If Cornwallis knelt close by Mrs. Tray and put his head closer yet, the baby's little hands would flap against

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 17

his face and delight his very soul. One day when he was enjoying the feeble little blows, he suddenly made a remark which drove Mrs. Tray to give his sister to Nellie and rush from the room. The remark was a very simple one, but it told a long story — it showed that Cornwallis had not been as completely distracted by his new life as those older and wiser had hoped and believed. This is what he said as he huddled himself up close to his little sister's little, aimless hands:

"I should think that even if Mamma does n't care ever to see me again, she would like to see Elaine — Elaine is so dear, and little, and funny."

He had always called the baby "Elaine" from the moment when Grandpapa had made that speech to Papa on the day of her coming, and no one had been able to make him change. Mrs. Tray had tried to tell him that the name was too big for so small a young lady, but Cornwallis was firm.

"I do not believe in nicknames," he said, looking into Mrs. Tray's face, with powerful and biting innuendo in his tone. And the morning after, being in his grandmother's room, he had thought to give her her dose also and had said:

"I think that Elaine will enjoy her ride on the veranda to-day."

Whereupon his grandmother had risen abruptly and left him alone forthwith.

You can see that life was fast becoming a very mys-

terious affair at Grandpapa's and Grandmamma's house.

The weeks went on and on. The baby was beginning to make little gurgles in her throat, and to have quite a good deal of strength in her bits of fingers. And she was crazy over Cornwallis; when he came in, she quivered all over like a bird that is making the twig shake, too, as it sings. Cornwallis thought it was too wonderful, just to be allowed to be with her.

"She does not make up for my mother," he said one day to Nellie, "but I am very glad to have her and for her to have me."

Nellie started to speak and then stopped. It had been decided that any statement to Cornwallis regarding his mother would be worse than futile under existing circumstances.

The next day was another of what Cornwallis had named to himself "the new kind of Sundays," because they were so widely different from the happy Sundays of other time, — those Sundays when his mamma and papa and he used to frolic together and laugh out loud over how silly they were. The new Sundays were almost exactly like week-days, only still more so. His papa came sometimes in the afternoon and looked at Elaine, and patted her brother's cheek, but he hardly spoke and almost never smiled. Mrs. Tray did the talking, and Elaine was afraid of her own father, and cried.

Elaine was almost three months old now, and all

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 19

her black hair had rubbed off, and she had funny little yellow duck-tails turning up all over her funny little yellow head. She could shake a rattle, too, and when she was displeased the way she could scream was awful. She screamed just that way upon this particular Sunday, screamed right in Papa's face, screamed so fearfully that Mrs. Tray had to carry her out of the room.

"You see, she does n't hardly know you," Cornwallis said in apology for the little sister whom he was learning to love more valorously every day. "She cried just so hard at the man who brought her bed. You see, I learned to know you when I used to live with Mamma before she came, but she's never had a chance to know you, and I guess she's never going to see Mamma ever." He sighed heavily as he terminated his brief explanation, for he did sorely long to know what had really become of his mother; but as all his questions brought only the vaguest sort of answers, he had ceased repeating them.

Papa arose and began to walk up and down the room; Cornwallis remained quietly seated on the little stool by the chair that Mrs. Tray had just quitted; he still held in his hands a toy with which he had been amusing the baby before his father came in.

"See here, Captain," his father said suddenly, "would you like to go and see Mamma again?"

The woolly man fell out of Cornwallis's hands. The woolly man fell because the small hands had become suddenly palsied, — suddenly palsied because all the blood in the child's body was pouring into his face.

"*Can* I — ever — see her again?" he stammered.

"I'll take you to-morrow," said his father, and left the room in the same sudden way in which every one seemed given to rushing away these days.

The next morning, just after Elaine had gone for her nap, Papa came for Cornwallis. Papa was in the runabout with Peter. Nellie brought Cornwallis out to them, and they drove away — a long, long drive.

"Does n't Mamma live in our house any more?" the boy asked in surprise, when they were far outside of the city.

"No," said Papa, and said no more.

Then they came to a most beautiful park, and well within it was a great white house, with countless windows and balconies. There were a good many people all about, either sitting down or lying in long chairs, and ever so many gentlemen and ladies all in white, with white caps, walking around. Cornwallis was deeply interested.

They drove to a side door, and he and Papa got down and went inside.

"Now, Major, listen to me," said Papa, not exactly crossly, but in such a way that Cornwallis felt

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 21

he must be obeyed, whatever came. "Your mamma is ill. She has been ill a long time. She may not know you; she has n't known any one for all the long time; she does n't know that there is a baby — any baby except you. You must n't mind what she says, and you must n't mind if she says nothing."

Papa paused.

"I sha'n't mind anything," said Cornwallis, stoutly. "I'll be too glad to see her again. She can kiss me all she likes, you can call me Captain Jinks, and Grandpapa can say Snoddy-boggins — I won't mind one bit, because I'll be just so glad to see her again —" He had to stop right there, partly because Papa was staring so, and partly because the biggest lump he had ever had had come up in his throat all of a sudden.

Papa held out his hand.

"Come, Cornwallis," he said, calling the boy by his right name for the first time in his life; and then they went through a great many sweet, quiet, white halls and so came to the most wonderfully beautiful room of which Cornwallis had ever dreamed.

It was not the delicate blue and cream of its walls and ceiling, nor the soft green of its floor, nor the pretty brass bed, nor the lovely flowers, nor the yellow canary singing in the window — it was the mother on the bed, the thin, changed mother, the same, unchanged mother, for whom a childish heart had sorrowed so.

Cornwallis approached the bed on tiptoe. A lady in white had risen and stood still by the head of the bed, and Papa stood still at its foot. A door opened softly, and a gentleman whom Cornwallis had never seen slipped in behind a screen, and the gentleman stood still, too. It was all strange, but the strangest of all was the mother on the bed. She did not seem to pay any attention to anything, just lay there, looking straight up at the bed draperies, and her son saw how very big and hollow her eyes were, and what pitiful, thin, bony things her soft white hands had become.

But still it was his mother, the mother of the old Sundays and the time before Elaine came.

"May I kiss her?" he asked Papa, looking backward.

Papa just nodded.

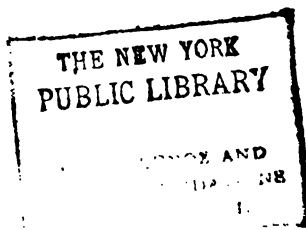
Then Cornwallis climbed up on the white bed — he was all in white himself, even to the white bows on his new white canvas pumps — and put his arms around her and kissed her. She looked up at him with the same curious, wide-eyed stare, and then she frowned. Cornwallis did n't see the frown, because his face was down close to hers, and he was hugging her with all the strength not needed to keep down the lump in his throat. But Papa saw it and saw her move her poor, bony hands, and saw her lips tremble.

"Speak, Cornwallis," he said in a low, sharp



“ ‘Mamma!’ he cried loudly, ‘it’s your baby!’ ” *Page 23*

HOME FOR THE WORLD



THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 23

voice. "Say whatever you please, but say something."

"Mamma!" he cried loudly, "it's your baby!"

It was his second surrender. He had just dropped his shackles, apparently — at least, so far as one parent was concerned — and now he slipped them on again for the pleasure of the other. Something heroic in that action — for a six-year-old!

There was a hush like death in the room. Even Cornwallis felt it. Every one was waiting for something.

"Mamma," he cried again, "please call me 'baby' just as you always do."

Then his mother's eyelids fell over her eyes, which had stared steadily so long, and a little smile chased the frown from her face.

"Oh, yes," she said, in a queer sort of whisper, "he'll sleep here to-night — the baby —" and she turned her face in upon Cornwallis's clean white blouse exactly as Elaine always turned hers in upon Mrs. Tray's bosom, and drew a funny little gasp exactly as Elaine always did — and went to sleep.

Papa laid his finger on his lip, and Cornwallis kept perfectly still. They brought ever so many pillows, big and little, and poked them in around him so skilfully that he was quite easy in his queer position. His mother put one of her hands up just as Elaine always put hers up when she slept — her hand made him think of Elaine's as it had been when

she first came — like a thin little claw. He looked down at her face on his shoulder and thought how like the baby she looked in ever so many odd ways.

Papa stood at the foot of the bed and smiled. The tears came into his eyes, sometimes, as he looked at the two on the bed. The gentleman who had gone behind the screen slipped away and presently returned with two huge portfolios full of pictures. He gave them to the lady in white, and she set them up one at a time where Cornwallis could see them. It was as good as a picture-book, and he looked at them with interest until — until he fell asleep himself.

I don't know how they ever managed it, but when he woke up he was on the bed in his own room at Grandmamma's, and Grandmamma was sitting weeping beside him.

"Oh, Sugar-pl—I mean, Cornwallis," she said, "you have saved her — she will come back to us now."

"Saved who?" asked Cornwallis, wondering if he were still dreaming.

"Your mamma, your precious mamma," said Grandmamma, and then before she could say more Grandpapa came in, with the biggest smile Cornwallis had ever seen.

"Well, Skiddy—I mean, Cornwallis," said Grandfather, "I don't think much of goats; let's have a pony — two ponies — ten, if you like — twenty — forty!"

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 25

Cornwallis stared at him, and before he could speak, there was Papa, too.

"Well, Captain Ji—I mean, Cornwallis," said Papa, jovially, in quite his old way, "what shall it be — chocolate cigarettes or lemon drops?" and he took both of these articles (which were so rare and difficult to procure in the place of which I write, that often they could not be bought between Christmas and Fourth of July) out of his pocket and gave them to the small boy.

"Is Mamma come home?" he asked.

"No, Major — I mean, Cornwallis," said Papa, blithely, "not yet, but you are to go to see her every morning from now on and put her to sleep just as you did to-day — how's that?"

Cornwallis did not even notice the candies; he clasped his hands tightly.

"Oh," he said, "I will do *anything* if just I may see her every day again. I will be quite still, and you don't need to put the pillows around me, thank you."

"Oh, bless the Sug— Cornwallis!" cried Grandmamma, and then she burst into more tears.

"Never mind, Snooks — I mean, Cornwallis," said Grandpapa, lifting him off the bed and carrying him over by the window; "let's have a little carriage for the ponies, one big enough for you to drive Nellie and the baby out in!"

Cornwallis's eyes flashed, but his attention being

attracted back to Grandmamma at that second, he could not reply. Grandmamma was weeping still and repeating, much louder than she realized, "To think that she knew him — to think that she knew him!" He struggled down out of his grandfather's arms and went back to his grandmother's side and laid his hand upon her knee.

"Does n't she know you?" he asked, wide-eyed.

"No, not me — not any one — since, oh, since about the time the baby came."

Cornwallis stared fixedly ahead, considering.

"That is why no one ever spoke of her," he said slowly, working his big problem out as fast as his little brain would permit.

"I thought that I should never see her again," he said after a little pause, deciding to take them all into his confidence.

"I thought for a long time that she was gone away just as Nellie's mother went away," he said, looking around at them all, his mouth quivering as he spoke. "Nellie cried, but I did not cry. I should n't think that you would have minded her not knowing you," he went on, very slowly; "you knew she was there and you could go and look at her — I have n't known where she was. I've wondered and wondered and wondered. I've thought about it when I woke up in the dark; I've thought about it when I was running my cars; I've thought about it all the time when I was

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 27

playing with Elaine, because after Elaine got her eyes open her eyes were just like Mamma's. It was n't any use my asking about — about Mamma, because no one would tell me. Every one always thinks I am so little — and — and calls me names — but — but I don't mind names now — and *I* would n't mind if she had n't known me, either; I would have loved her and talked about her just the same. If she does n't know me, I will go just the same every day, and put her to sleep — I'll be so glad just to be with her again — I —" He stopped abruptly, and started to walk out of the room, but in the little armchair just at Grandmother's door he fell, head forward, and burst into tears more tumultuous than even Grand-mamma's own.

His father went to him and gathered him close in his arms.

"Oh, why did n't you take me to her before?" Cornwallis sobbed. "I was what she wanted — I'm her baby; I *always* was what she wanted. I used to run away from her because she wanted to hold me so tight. I've thought how I used to run away every one of these days. That's why I let Elaine pull my hair. She's never had Mamma hug her — she's only just had Mrs. Tray — and I let her pull as hard as she could because I was always thinking how was she going to — to live — without any mamma —"

"Cornwallis, stop," said his father, very gently

J

but very firmly; "grown-up people make mistakes often, but we are trying to do right just as much as you are. No one could tell you anything about Mamma except what would have made you very unhappy, and you had to stay bright for little sister. We could n't smile and we could hardly speak — it was better to keep you so that you could. Don't you understand?" and then he carried him away to a quiet, dark room, where Cornwallis was soothed back to calmness, and became fit to go and see his mother again.

A week or so later he was so accustomed to the daily visit and to beginning his own nap there and ending it at Grandmother's that life merged completely out of tragedy and into a sweet, happy routine again. When his mother began to watch for his coming, when she began to speak little phrases, when she knew Papa, and wanted him to sit on the other side of the bed and hold her other hand — all these were the events of that summer.

Grandmamma became as cheerful as she had been in the long-ago time; Grandpapa whistled and was always starting to say "Snooks" and then stopping himself short; Elaine was usually down on the floor trying to eat up the embroidery on the hem of her dress, and giving little shrieks of joy whenever she saw Cornwallis, just on the mere chance that he *might* be bringing his hair to her to be pulled. They were all very happy.

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 29

And then, at last, one day the telephone bell rang, and it was Mamma, and she asked for Grandpapa and said to him, "I'm at home!" and nothing else. Grandpapa came upstairs and told them all, and that afternoon every one but Elaine and Mrs. Tray went down and had tea at Cornwallis's own house, and the next day Cornwallis and Nellie went back there to live.

The queer part was that little Elaine could not go, and that, while *en route* in the Fearless Kerosene, both Grandpapa and Grandmamma told Cornwallis all over again for the hundred and fiftieth time how Mamma did *not* know that there was any Elaine, and must *not* be told of the fact.

"Won't she ever know?" he said wistfully. "Won't I ever have Elaine and Mamma both at once?"

"Perhaps — after a while," said Grandmamma, vaguely.

So now, instead of going every day to see his mother, Cornwallis had to go twice a day to see his sister. Elaine was becoming absolutely irresistible. She talked with her forefinger most intelligibly, and laughed with two dimples and eight little white teeth.

"What do you do up at Grandmamma's?" Mamma asked Cornwallis one day when he came in to kiss her good-by.

"I play with my things," he said.

"Come here, Baby," said Mamma, fondly, and he went straight to her and snuggled close to her side. "You are a real comfort now," she said, smiling; "you used to be such a horrid, struggling little fellow never liking to be loved," and then she loved him with her soft cheek and both her hands, that had ceased to be bony, and were white and pretty again. "You are my own, ownest baby," she said, over and over again, and he entered no demur, but merely kissed her in return.

"Do you remember," she said, "how you used to hate to be called a baby?"

Cornwallis laughed.

"But you don't mind now?"

"I like it," he said, looking merrily into her eyes.

And then she hugged him once more in a peculiarly choking manner that had always seemed to give her a special satisfaction, and he went away to the cunning motherless little sister who was big enough now to clap her hands and bat her little blue kid heels against the rug when she saw him enter her room.

"Elaine is going to have a birthday next week," Mrs. Tray told him this morning.

"How old will she be?" he asked with interest. Elaine was trying to chew up his thumb as he spoke, but he did n't mind her little ways — she was always wanting to bite something or somebody.

"She will be a year old," replied Mrs. Tray.

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 31

"Won't you give Mamma to her for her present?" said Cornwallis.

"We don't know just what to do," said Mrs. Tray, wrinkling her forehead thoughtfully. "You see, generally when a new baby comes it is so little that it really does n't matter much; but Elaine is so big, she matters a good deal."

"Well, I should say so," said Cornwallis. Elaine had climbed to her feet and was clinging to his collar for support, and screaming to attract every one's attention to the fact that she was standing up just like other people.

"And your mamma is almost too weak yet," began Mrs. Tray, but just then Elaine, in a fervor of womanly independence, let go of her brother, and instantly sat down with such violence that all other subjects dropped with her.

Nevertheless, the grown-up people adopted Cornwallis's suggestion, and decided to celebrate Elaine's first birthday by introducing her to her mother. Mamma was walking about upstairs now, and talking and laughing quite like her old self. The lady in white who had lived there so long spent most of her time reading in her own room; she did n't seem to have any business in the house any more.

On the morning of Elaine's birthday Cornwallis went into his mother's room. He was in a very fresh white sailor-suit, and he let his mother muss the collar without a murmur. Presently Papa came in,

and they all three sat on the sofa together and played Three Bears, just as they used to play long ago.

"But I'm too big to be a Baby Bear now," Cornwallis said, when the crease was almost entirely out of his trousers and Mamma was still tumbling his blouse.

"If we only had a real little Baby Bear!" said Papa.

Mamma put both arms suddenly around Cornwallis.

"Oh, *don't!*" she cried, in a queer voice, "don't remind me. Do you think I don't know and remember? Why, if the little thing had lived it would have been big enough to play here with us now!"

Cornwallis felt his father start; he slipped out from between them instantly, and stood up and spoke:

"I don't think this has been a very well-managed family this year!" he said indignantly, comprehending perfectly that his mother had thought of Elaine just as he had thought of his mother, and sympathizing with her from the keen standpoint of an equal sorrow.

"Now don't cry," he said sternly; "nobody has done anything without they cried for ever so long," and then he wiped his eyes hard with his two hands and ran out of the room, for he and Papa both knew that Elaine was asleep in her little carriage out by

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 33

the side door, waiting for a good chance to meet her mamma.

A little later she woke, and Mrs. Tray and Nellie and Grandmamma took her into the sunshine-room off of the back hall and tied a bow on her shoulder, and fluffed up some of her hair and smoothed down some, and gave her a drink of milk. And then they carried her up to Mamma, who was quite white with expecting her.

Cornwallis's heart beat very fast; he stepped behind his mother's chair, and bit his lips.

Elaine was dreadfully frightened; she did n't seem to know that she was in her own house at all. She looked at even Mrs. Tray with a most dubious expression, and her chin quivered awfully. Papa had his arm about Mamma, and Mamma said, "Ah, but she's a very pretty little thing," and then, "I wonder if she could sit on my lap for a minute," and then, "My little daughter!"

It looked as if every one was surely going to cry *now*, and then all of a sudden Cornwallis saved the situation. He just peeped around the back of Mamma's chair, and Elaine saw him.

She fairly shrieked for joy! Mrs. Tray put her on Mamma's lap, and Cornwallis went down on his knees before her, and she grabbed the sailor collar just where the bright stripe ran, and began stuffing it into her mouth, while her little feet danced so wildly that Cornwallis had to catch them

in his hands to keep her from maybe hurting Mamma.

Every one began at once to laugh, Papa and Grandmamma first of all. Grandpapa had gotten there also, somehow, and Cornwallis heard him laughing, too, right behind him. When Elaine saw them all laughing, she laughed with them, and burying her fingers in Cornwallis's hair, just screamed in ecstasy.

It was all very silly — and nice.

Cornwallis was the first to become sober.

"Well, it's no wonder we feel happy," he said; "we all know we're all right here to-day, and all this year we've been crying because everybody thought somebody was n't. I don't think that's right in a family."

Mamma put out her hand and pulled him closer yet (by that same unfortunate collar).

"Oh, Baby," she said, "you always knew more than all the rest of us put together."

"I do when I'm told things I ask," he replied with dignity.

Just then Norah came in with Elaine's cunning little birthday cake on a silver tray.

"Just like Sug—I mean Cornwallis's, when *he* was a baby," said Grandmamma.

"He's my baby yet," said Mamma, pulling him up to the place from which Mrs. Tray had just lifted Elaine.

"Yes, I am," said Cornwallis, meekly. His sur-

THE SURRENDERS OF CORNWALLIS 35

render was most complete, and as soul-satisfying as only the yielding of love can be.

Norah had brought up a bottle of champagne, and Papa opened it while Grandmamma cut the cake. No one ate or drank anything, because it was n't a cake or champagne hour of the day, but they each took a sip to Elaine's health, and to Mamma's happiness. And then Grandpapa began, "And now we'll drink to Sn—" but he was arrested right there by the steadiness of his grandson's eye, and corrected his language to "Cornwallis."

Cornwallis drew a deep breath. His sweet little sister was never to be tortured with "Butter-ball" and "Was-a-Wee" — she was Elaine, and forever Elaine, and that through his own efforts and his efforts alone. And he was Cornwallis to every one but Mamma, but still to be "Baby" to a mamma was better than being "Cornwallis" to a world.

So the young General marched forth, head up, flags flying, his little heart drumming the best music in all the world, and his soul serenely conscious that out of the jaws of victory he had snatched a final and most glorious defeat.

THE PRACTICAL CARE OF A FAIRY

NORA stood by the window, looking out.

"I wish I had a dancing mouse," she said. "Harriet's little sister had two dancing mice for her birthday. I do wish I had just one."

Nora's mother, writing at her desk, made no answer.

"I would so like to have a rabbit, too," Nora said next, her tone low and meditative, but keenly insistent; "a rabbit with pink eyes. You can hold rabbits tight and love them. If I might only just have a rabbit!"

And then she left the window and came to her mother's side, and held up one of her rosy fingers as a sign that she *must* be attended to at once.

Her mother stopped writing and looked up.

"Well, darling?" she said in question.

"Mamma, I *do* want something alive."

"Oh, no you don't, my dear."

"But I do, mamma — truly I do."

"Living things require a great deal of care; they cannot be laid aside like dolls."

"But I would take care of the rabbit."

"You could not have a rabbit, dear. Rabbits need a garden, and we have no garden."

"Could I have some dancing mice, then?"

"Oh, my child, they smell horribly."

"What *could* I have, then?"

"All pets are a great care, dear — a much greater care than you can possibly imagine. It is not as if we lived in the country, we only have a small town house, and no pet can do very well or be very happy shut up in the way we should be obliged to keep it. Besides, anything that has to be attended to daily and hourly is a great deal too much for a little girl of eight to see to herself — you would soon tire, and your pet, so far from bringing you pleasure, would be unhappy itself, and make a great deal of work for the maids."

"Oh, but I would do the work, mamma," said Nora.

"But it is such disagreeable work cleaning cages and boxes day after day. Tame animals have to be kept very, very clean."

Nora looked doubtful at that. She liked to feed and pet creatures, but not to scrub and sweep their houses.

"If there would only a fairy come," she said finally, "a fairy would n't be messing her food about. If a fairy came you'd let me keep her, would n't you, mamma?"

"Even a fairy would be a care," said the mother,

smiling and tapping the rosy finger with her pen, "more care than you can imagine."

"But if one came, would you let me keep it?"

Nora was very earnest.

"I think that you would get extremely tired of attending to its wants; nevertheless, I don't mind promising you that if a fairy comes you may keep it."

Nora grew quickly radiant.

"Oh, you darling mamma!" she cried, "I saw one skimming around the dahlias yesterday; it was so quick that I could only hear it — but I know that it was a fairy. Perhaps it *will* come to me."

The mother smiled again.

"Look and see if James is at the door with the carriage," she said, folding her letter into its envelope.

Nora ran to the window.

"Yes, he 's there!" she replied.

Her mother left the room, and a few minutes later she drove away from the house.

Then Nora went up to her own pretty nursery with the balcony and its pots of flowers. She was very fond of this little bit of outdoors which love had put into her town life; she liked to water her flowers, and bring her toys out into the sunlight. There was a little table and a little rocking-chair. She used frequently to sit in the rocking-chair, and have tea-parties on the table. Her crockery was kept in a box close beside, so as to be handy, and now she sat down in the chair and drew the

box towards her so as to set them out before Sarah, coming upstairs, should bring her four o'clock tea.

The box required rather more reaching for than usual, and when Nora straightened up from leaning down she gave a little cry, and put her hand to her ear. It was as if a fine wire had pierced into her brain, and the next instant she felt the words that had been threaded on the wire. They were fine, sharp little words — the kind that command immediate attention.

"Look out!" they said, "I'm on the table."

With her hand still to her tingling ear, she looked quickly at the table, and there was the fairy — a real, live fairy — about two inches high, with her arms up unhooking her wings, as little girls unbutton their dresses at night. It was a real fairy, too, the dearest, wee thing, with bits of hands and feet and a frock made of flower petals.

"I heard your mamma say that I could stay, so I thought that I would just try visiting you," said the fairy. "I shall stay as long as it is agreeable, so I give you fair warning to do your best to make me comfortable."

Nora was so surprised and thunderstruck by the little apparition that she absolutely could not speak for a minute or two.

"I shall not be very particular," said the fairy; "I can attend to my own hair, and so forth. But I

shall require a room and food, of course. I trust you understand *that*."

All her words penetrated Nora's brain on the same sharp wire arrangement, but the little girl forgot their physical sting in her continual fresh astonishment. She never had imagined that fairies talked in just that tone and way.

"There, there, there," said the fairy now, "come, come, come. You look quite enough like Jack o' Lantern without being dumb, too; jump up and show me where I can live."

Nora rose from her seat as if in a dream, and stood looking at her visitor.

"Well, well, well!" said the fairy impatiently; "what, what, what?"

"Could you live in the dolls' house?" Nora asked, in a great burst of courage, pointing to where it stood.

The fairy glanced where she pointed.

"In there!" — she gave a little screech — "in that wretched place! Why, my child, that to me is as living in an empty barn would be to you — it's nothing but a great, big, barren hole."

"I suppose the furniture *is* too big," said Nora.

"Too big! My child, those chairs to me are like soap boxes would be to you."

Nora looked at her.

"You're littler than the littlest doll," she said; "yes, you're too little for the dolls' house. But,"

she went on after a minute, "perhaps I could make you a little room out of a cardboard box, turned on one side, you know."

"A cardboard box! Heaven preserve me!" said the fairy with a very unkind laugh, "a cardboard box to me would be as a railway-truck turned on its side to you. And then as to furniture?"

"Oh, as to that," — Nora was brightening — "I have two little chairs made out of spools, with velvet seats. You could have those."

"Velvet seats!" said the fairy in great disgust; "my child, velvet to me is like a door mat to you. Should you like to sit on furniture covered with door mats?"

"No," said Nora. And then there was a pause. "Mamma has some silver filigree furniture from Turkey in her cabinet," she said then. "You could have that."

"Silver filigree!" cried the fairy, shrilly, "silver filigree to me is like sitting on hot water pipes would be to you. No, child, I don't care for your mamma's silver furniture from Turkey."

"Perhaps I could make you a little cushion to sit on," Nora suggested.

"What would you stuff it with?" asked the fairy.

"Cotton wool," Nora hazarded.

"Oh!" cried the fairy, sharply, "cotton wool to me is like the coarsest shavings to you. No, child, I don't want your cushion."

Nora's lip almost trembled, the fairy's tone was so very curt.

"Do get me some water," said the fairy. "You gave me to understand that I should be well-cared-for if I came, and I've come, and I'm thirsty."

"Ordinary water?" Nora asked.

"Ordinary water!" screamed the fairy. "No, child, double-distilled dew. I have n't touched anything else for four centuries."

"I'm afraid we have n't any," Nora murmured uncomfortably.

"Have n't any! Well, then, get me a drop of what you have. A whole drop, mind you. I'm *so* warm."

"What shall I put it in?" Nora asked.

"Have n't you any hemp-seed cups?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"Good gracious! — what sort of a hole have I dropped into?"

"I have some little brass caps that bullets are shot out of," said Nora, timidly.

"Brass caps! Brass caps, child, to me, are like iron water-pails to you; no, no brass caps for *me*."

"Could you drink from a saltspoon?"

"Could you drink from a shovel?" asked the fairy.

Nora winked back her tears.

"I suppose," said the fairy, "that you will have to spill a little into a glass saucer and I shall have to scoop it up with my hand. Did anyone ever endure

such hardships before? How dared you wish to entertain a fairy? Goodness me, think what creatures who can't talk would suffer at your hands when I, with my sharp tongue, can't get a chair or a drink."

The tears fell so thickly at that that Nora turned and ran as fast as she could for the water.

When she returned the fairy leant over the edge of the saucer, and, making a cup of her hand, managed to slake her thirst.

"Oh, the abominable stuff," she said as she rose. "I can see what I am in for. And now about food. What can I have?"

"Would you like some grains of sugar?" Nora faltered.

"Grains of sugar! Grains of sugar to me, child, are like eating whole lumps would be to you. No, I don't want any grains of sugar."

"What would you like?" Nora asked.

"What I'm not very likely to get," said the fairy. "I'd like flies' legs fried in moth-dust — but, goodness! I might as well wish for the moon, I know."

"Oh, I'm afraid you might," said poor Nora in great dismay; "but — but is n't there anything else?"

The fairy sighed.

"A bee-cutlet, perhaps," she said; "but you would n't know how to cook it."

Then she sighed again. There was another pause.

"I wonder if I could have a nap," she said at last.

"I can endure hunger and thirst when I must, but I *am* so fatigued standing here yelling at you."

"What is your bed like at home?" Nora asked.

"My springs are grape tendrils, my sheets are spun cobweb, and my mattress is stuffed with butterflies' feathers."

"Oh, dear me!" cried Nora in dismay. "I'm afraid we never can get you a bed like that."

The fairy stooped and took up her wings.

"I think I'll go," she said very coldly. "I see that you had n't an idea what you were talking about when you said you would love to take care of me. Thank goodness I'm not a dancing mouse, or an alligator, or an unhappy rabbit to suffer at your hands — thank goodness I had a tongue, and thank goodness I used it. You've learnt a good lesson, child; remember it hereafter."

She seemed to be having some difficulty getting her wings adjusted.

"Could I help you?" Nora asked, for she remembered to be polite even though she considered the fairy the rudest lady that she had ever met.

"No," said the fairy, "your fingers to me are what having your gown buttoned by a steam crane would be to you. I prefer to fasten my wings myself. Good-day," and she sprang into the air and was gone.

Nora sat down in her little chair before her little table and drew a long, long sigh of relief. Then she

laid her head on her arm and went fast asleep, forgetting all her troubles, until Sarah, coming up with the tea, woke her.

When mamma came home later she told her all about it.

"Was n't she rude and disagreeable?" she said, "and oh, mamma, suppose she *had* stayed three days, or lost her wings and not been able to get away, or *anything!*"

"It would have been awful," said mamma.

"I don't want to take care of anything alive now," said Nora; "that bad fairy has cured me."

"Ah," said mamma, smiling, "was she really a bad fairy then? And we living in the town, too." Then she kissed the little girl and said: "Wait till papa's holiday, dear, and then we will go into the real country, and you can have all the pets that you want for two long, happy months."

And Nora waited, quite content.

THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS

THE STORY OF A BOY'S LOVE

Sometimes it happens that during a spell of bad weather, intolerable in its dullness and, while it endures, appearing to be as endless as your life — or mine — there comes suddenly and without warning a break in the clouds, a stream of God's best material glory, an outcry of hope to joy, and then — and then — the clouds close calmly together again.

A MOTOR CAR stood at the street entrance, and its owner, cardcase in hand, just within the vestibule of the house.

The door opened presently, and the caller entered, giving the maid his card.

He saw the change in her expression as her eye fell upon the name engraved thereon. Almost timidly she raised her eyes to steal a glance as she took his coat and hat and stick. The coat was heavier than she expected for it was lined with priceless sable. As she carried it to a carved seat, he turned into the reception-room.

It was twenty years since the last time that he had entered the room — the last, the first, the only time

THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS 47

that Her home had ever before opened its doors to him. And they had been kind enough to him then — twenty years ago — to have brought him to make this call now — now, when She and her parents had returned home to live — now, when his position in regard to them and to every one was so vastly altered from what it had been a score of years ago.

The reception-room was the same. It had made such an impression on the boy of fifteen that memorable night that the man of thirty-five could not fail to note its absolute lack of change. The white chimney-piece bearing a gilt clock and a cut-glass vase, the marble group on a pedestal in the corner, the five chairs of gilded wicker, each with a silken cushion tied on at each corner so that the tassels hung about the legs, the polar-bear skin on the floor, the carved wood presentment of the Vatican hung against a velvet panel, and the big pastel of her, aged nine.

He noted all those details and some others that are to be observed when any room goes unchanged for twenty-five years, and then he went to the window, drew the lace curtain a bit aside and looked out upon the avenue. It was not curiosity which led him there, for he saw the avenue daily when he was in the city; but he had never seen it from her standpoint before. The other time that he had been in the house it was also night, but it was the night of the party, and all the shades were drawn. Oh, that

time, that other time, that one and only other time twenty years ago!

From where he stood he could see the turning into the side street — the side street which led to the hill, where he had first seen her upon that memorable day in his life.

As he looked, the day and its events rose up before him. The long, white smoothness, the dozen or so of coasting children, the *gay down*, the joking *up*, the fun and merriment in which he, the freckled-faced, red-haired boy who lived in the cottage "way at the bottom" always had his full share all the winter long. Sliding is a democratic sport, and he was a democrat — as the poor, freckled-faced, and red-haired generally are; and he had revelled in the winters and the comrades that they brought him, and hated the spring that thawed the masses into classes even before she had appeared upon that memorable day.

He did not need to close his eyes to see her again as he had seen her the first time, for the image had never grown dim to his memory. A little six-year-old girl with big eyes, long lashes, a beaming smile, and ten yellow curls bushing out from under her blue hockey cap. She wore a rough little coat, buttoned leggings, and fleecy mittens; she had a dark-red sled, and lots of pluck. The fun was pretty fast and pretty furious, but she jerked her sled into place and flung herself upon it with a right good

courage, and then away she went, and he, not stopping for anything, had forthwith flung himself upon his sled and made after her.

He reached the bottom first — as was to be expected of heavier weight and longer runners — and ran to help her up, and she gave him her very small mittened hand and said, "Thank you," very faintly but also very sweetly.

"I'll pull you up the hill now, if you like," he suggested, utterly charmed by the cunning figure and the big blue eyes.

"Oh, no, I can walk, and I can pull my own sled, too," she answered stoutly.

He saw that she was an independent little piece, and was afraid to urge assistance upon her as they trudged upwards side by side. About half-way up she began to puff most terribly and said once:

"It's a *very* nice — long — hill — is n't it?" He put his hand on her rope then and she did not rebel. The next time she let him pull both sleds up. After that for five years he *always* pulled both sleds up, and they grew up to be great friends. Once when she fell rather more hopelessly than is usual into a snow-bank he took her into his mother's to be brushed off and shaken out. He recalled that picture, too — the wee figure sitting before the stove just where they put her, the two hot red cheeks, the two wandering eyes, the vivid difference that he could see between her and her surroundings, the careful,

polite little "thank-you's" that she never ceased whispering all the time as his mother continued to busy herself for her comfort. He had taken her home afterwards and left her at the gate, and a queer blue feeling had bothered him all the evening. His mother had commented on her sweet face and pretty manners more than once, saying repeatedly, "The dear little lady that she was" — and that had n't helped his depression somehow.

And then years had passed on to one, two, three, four, and part of five, and so had come her tenth birthday.

"I'm going to have a party after Easter," she confided to him during what the weather had evidently determined should be the last coasting day for that year; "a real party with real printed cards, and a violin and a piano for music, and I'm going to ask *you*."

Oh, that beatific moment in his life! She was ever so much too little to understand what her words meant to her humble comrade. She was going to ask him to her party, she included him among her friends; he did n't know what to say so he said nothing at all. But she was smiling up at him and he turned and smiled down at her.

"I hope you'll come," she said.

"I hope I can," he responded.

"You must tell me when you know," she reminded him wisely, "so mamma can put an X opposite your name."

"I'll tell you," he promised.

But later he decided not to say anything to his mother for fear that there might be some mistake after all. "I'm such a different sort," he thought as he walked down the hill after having dragged her sled up and seen her headed towards home for the last time for that season as he believed, — in reality forever. "She don't know about such things, but maybe the family won't like her asking me; I'll be just as much obliged to her, but I won't tell mother for fear she'd be so disappointed when the invitation did n't come." He whistled as he dragged his sled round the corner of the cottage — somehow whistling seemed necessary to life just then. He put the sled in its place beside the woodpile and went in to supper. His mother greeted him with her usual cheery smile. She was a good mother, and her heart had never failed her in these hard years, the worst of which were now so nearly over. She had decided long ago that "the boy" should have an education and plenty of fresh air to start in with; after that "she'd see." The education was acquired, "the boy" was strong and healthy, and going to begin work the coming summer — the rosy little mother with a touch of unmistakable brogue twisting her tongue in trying moments, was sure that she "saw" now. She was very proud of him, very reverently disposed towards his possibilities, not one bit dubious as to the success that should

come to him from this time forth. She was one of the hopeful ones who are born to realization.

The next day it rained. Upon that rainy afternoon all the invitations for the famous party were addressed. There were quite seventy-five, her papa staying at home to help her mamma, so that all the pretty little missives might be in the box in time for the morning delivery.

"And my friend," said the small birthday maiden when her mother's hand moved over the last envelope but one — "my friend, who always pulls my sled home at nights. I want *him*, too."

"Who is that, my dear?" inquired her mother. "I have copied every name on the list, I'm sure."

"He has n't been on the list; he's been in my head. Don't you know that boy that always comes home with me?"

"No, I don't," said her mother, much puzzled.

"Why, yes you do, mamma. The big boy with the red hair and the lots of freckles — the boy that lives in the house right at the bottom of our sliding hill."

"Oh, *that* boy!" said her mother a little startled, "that Irish boy. Why, my dear child, you can't have *him* at your party."

She looked at her mother in surprise.

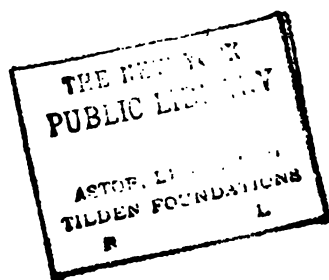
"Why can't I?" she asked.

Her tone was so sad and earnest that her mother, who loved her very dearly, looked at her father,



“Don't you know that boy that always comes home with me?”

Page 52



meaning him to explain the matter to her innocent brain.

But a curious train of thought had been fired in that father's head by a word in his wife's last speech, and to the latter's most intense astonishment he said :

"Well — why should n't she ask the lad ? He's always been very kind to her (as she says) — and — and, my dear, election's coming on, you know."

His wife looked at him for a few seconds, and then she lowered her eyes to the writing-table.

"Very well," she said quietly, "give me his name and address."

She wanted her husband to be elected, for her own father and mother lived in Washington.

Of this conversation the boy naturally knew nothing, but what he *did* know was that, on the morning of the next day he received his invitation !

It came by the first post. His mother took it from the postman's hands and carried it straight to where he was chopping wood. Her own hands shook as she gave it to him — letters were almost unknown to them — but he, of course, knew just what it must be. He was tremendously pleased. He put the axe down and came into the kitchen to open it.

"How kind of her," he said over and over as he looked at the dainty leaflet, "how *awful* kind of her. I like it just as much as if I could go."

"An' why should n't you go ?" his mother asked sharply.

He looked at her, a little astonished by her question.

"Why should n't you go?" she said again.

"I have n't got any clothes," he replied smiling.

She went into the little front room, was gone a minute or two, and returned with shining eyes and something in her closed hand.

"You 're going to that party," she said; "it's a big thing, an' you're asked, an' you're goin'. See, I've hung on to this through thick an' thin for hour of need, an' this is the hour." She opened her hand then and showed him a twenty-dollar note.

He closed her hand quickly upon it. He would n't hear of that — he was quite firm. But she was firmer. She wept bitterly. She implored him to give her (to give *her!*) this great joy, and in the end he was obliged to give in to her; so that they went that afternoon to fit him out.

It was a hard task, for the magnificent sum dwindled quickly and sorrowfully.

"I can make your tie — I've got some good black silk at home, some nice scraps, an' I can piece 'em under the bow," she whispered, while the clerk was looking for a shirt that was cheap.

He nodded, smiling. He hated taking the money, and would willingly have foregone the party, but as long as she had insisted, he could n't help being *very* happy.

He had to have shoes (terribly expensive ones, even though they were reduced on account of a

THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS 55

bit of scratch-damage on one instep) and a white shirt.

The clerk, to whom the twenty dollars had been proffered whenever anything was decided upon, said:

"He does n't need gloves."

They had all three been adding in their heads, and the announcement relieved an invisible strain in the atmosphere.

"No, I don't think so either," his mother said briskly.

Then the clerk asked if they would have the things sent, and as they preferred to carry them he took the twenty dollars and went, to return later with the meagre change.

They went home, and after supper he tried on the whole festive array so that his mother could see "what wanted doing." A good deal wanted doing, and she undertook it with unlimited love and limited skill.

On the great night they both spent over an hour dressing him. His mother parted his hair sixteen times before it suited her, she washed his face with soap herself, she tied his cravat. Her lips trembled from time to time, her heart was so full of love and hope. Mother-fancies fly quickly upward; as she knelt to tie his shoe-strings beyond any chance of slip, her mind was busy wondering what great joy would befall him this night.

He looked very droll as he stood up to go — any one who is altogether covered with genuine bargains is likely to do so — but his face was shining glad. He kissed her and went out, and walked slowly up the hill. It was a clear, frosty night, very much the same sort as that which he was to choose for his next visit to her home twenty years later. His mind was as full of pictures as his mother's, but they were vaguer and of more simple outline.

Arrived at the house, he went up the walk for the first time in his life — he had been used to leave her at the gate always — and mounted the steps. The door was glass from top to bottom, and a colored man was looking out. The man opened the door before he had even started to ring, and he went in.

The hall, the same as twenty years henceforth. The carved seat under the stairs the same too.

"Upstairs, please," said the colored man, and he went upstairs.

He was troublously oppressed; it was his first glimpse of another world, and how that other world is housed. It was from this sort of rooms that she went forth to slide — with him. It was in this sort of a place that she was accustomed to play and eat and sleep. He felt dizzy at the hugeness of the difference.

A maid said: "Here, please."

And he went in "there."

An elegantly-attired gentleman stood before the

mirror, and one boy was taking his pumps out of his overcoat pockets. The boy was a stranger, and stared abominably. The elegant gentleman was the violin half of the music for dancing, and when he was through admiring himself in the mirror, he went down to earn his share of seven dollars and a half.

The boy put his old cap and his coat with the patched lining very carefully upon the foot of the lace-covered bed; he never had imagined a lace bedcover, and thought how beautiful it looked over the blue underneath. Three boys came bouncing in together just then, and one was a boy who coasted.

"Hello!" cried that boy with most genuine surprise.

"Hello," the other replied, choking back something that was a little resentful at the other's amazement.

No more was said. He hesitated in the door for a minute, and then decided to go down. He went down. She was standing in the doorway of the reception room, peeping out to see who was coming next; she smiled upon him, and blushed as pink as her dainty frock, and held out her tiny gloved hand. He shook hands with her, he was dumb and deepest red; her mother spoke to him, and smiled too — not very cordially. Then the three boys came down together, and some little girls too, and the music began, and they all laughed and talked and some danced. And more came. And more.

And now his hour of ordeal dawned. They filled the next room and the room beyond that. He did n't know any of them, and he did n't dance. She danced, and was a great favorite, and he saw her spinning about like a pink fairy top, but she had n't a minute for him. He stood about in misery, a big, awkward lad, red-haired and freckled, in badly-fitting clothes, shoes that pinched, a collar that cut, and a wretched lump in his throat that would hardly keep down.

"I'm not her sort," he said over and over again, with a wretched realization that cuts all lives to which it comes clean in two from that hour on. "I'm not her sort, and I ought to have stayed away."

He went into a smaller room at one side, and found a table with books and magazines. Seating himself, he started to read. The gay music kept him from being able to fix his thoughts, hard as he tried; the voices and laughter drove the lump more and more solidly into the sorest part of his throat. He rested his arm on the table, stared at the book, and was conscious that dreams of one sort were over for him now. Air castles he would never build again. Into her house he would never again enter, unless he knew himself welcomed as an equal. But he would work — when he finished school the next month — ah, *how* he would work!

A man appeared in the doorway. It was her father, a tall, fine-looking gentleman with a mus-



"He did n't know any of them, and he did n't dance." Page 58

tache as yellow and curly as that hair that had bobbed up the coasting hill at his side so many, many times.

"Ah, somebody reading," said her father. "You don't dance, I take it?"

He rose to his feet. "No, sir, I never learned."

Her father (who had only just arrived from a dinner at the club) cast one glance over the queer figure before him, and guessed who he was.

"Sit down," he said cordially, pulling up a chair for himself as he spoke. "I have to thank you for looking out for our little girl so kindly; tell me about yourself."

"I don't think there is anything to tell, sir; she was n't any trouble — it was a pleasure."

Her father smiled. Then he opened a drawer in the end of the big table by which they were sitting, and pulled out some curiously colored maps.

"You never saw any like these," he asked.

"No, sir, never."

He was interested, the lump forgotten. Her father explained how these maps were to illustrate the industrial divisions of the world, where mines were being worked, where wheat was the one crop, etc., etc. He explained well and rapidly, and the boy listened eagerly.

"And the railroad king is the real king," concluded her father, "because he is the one who controls all the interchange of these manifold sources

of our national wealth. If we were sure of his integrity, of his honor, of his earnest striving for the universal good, we might safely leave him his throne and go our many ways in tranquil peace and humble content. But are we sure? I say — Are we sure? No, and we never can be sure unless we bridle the power of the mighty magnate by a mightier — by Congress. Therefore, I —”

He stopped suddenly. In spite of the fact that he had been dining, the wonder in the boy's face made him realize that he had inadvertently drifted into a sort of dress rehearsal of his speech for next Wednesday — a speech which was to gain him the vote of every man who should hear it, he was positive. He paused abruptly and coughed.

“Is that all, sir?” the boy asked respectfully.

“Yes — oh, yes, that's all.”

He was sorry. It had interested him to hear about the railway men being just like kings. He had always liked railroads, and to-night was a good night to learn respect for all who ruled others. Perhaps the germ that led him to seek employment in a railway office the next summer was planted then.

He did not stay so very late at the party. He disappeared soon after supper. His mother was waiting up for him, and he lied heroically about the pleasure he had taken. She went to bed very happy when he had done, and he went to bed too, tired

and a bit sore-hearted over the new lessons so roughly taught him that night.

The morning after things looked brighter, and he said, "Well, mother, I've learned one thing, and that is that I'm going to be a railroader just as soon as I can be anything."

And into a railway office he went, first as errand-boy, later in the same month as private boy to a minor official. Whatever gift he brought to the business it was something unusual, for in less than three years he was an under-clerk, going to business college at nights, and working like a dog all day. Up and out in the icy dark of early morning in winter, first at the office, last at the office, going on inspection trips, sometimes because his knowledge was almost indispensable to his chief, understanding each man's work often better than the man himself did, energetic, pushing, on — on — onward — forward — upward.

And always with the goad at his flank, "The railroad king is the real king," and that bitter prod, "I'm not her sort," keeping the other company. Words like that may alter the course of a life — they have done so before now.

He did not live in the cottage at the foot of the hill any more. In a flat instead. His mother liked the conveniences, but missed her patch of garden. She was perfectly happy in her worship of her son and pride over his career.

At twenty-two they made him an assistant something, and he wanted her to begin to keep a servant. But she would not have it at all. To do his cooking and washing and darning was her great joy — no other human being should share it. He kissed her and acquiesced, and she hugged him and patted his head, reaching up on tiptoe to do so. He was developing into a fine-looking young fellow, and she thought with a pang of the girl who would soon be appearing now. But the girl came not.

When he was twenty-four, he returned to tea one night looking white and weary.

"Did you see the evenin' paper?" she asked smiling.

He nodded. "Yes, read it coming out on the car. I had n't thought of her as old enough — yet."

Directly supper was over that night he went to his room and closed the door.

"He's takin' a good sleep," his mother thought with much satisfaction, as she locked up and put the lights out.

But he was n't asleep. He was sitting on the side of his bed, biting his under-lip and thinking. Ever since the first time that her father had been elected to Congress she had lived in Washington and spent her summers at the seashore, never returning to her old home at all. And so now she had married there. He had n't quite calculated upon that. He was not sure that he had ever calculated on anything,

but he had certainly never calculated upon that. He bit his lip so deeply that the blood came. Of what had he been thinking all these years that the news of her great wedding had loosed upon him this intolerable pain! Of little bobbing curls under the hockey cap of long ago! Oh, smile of sunshine, to be shed sunshine-wise upon the life way of another man! Towards dawn he rose with a heavy sigh, undressed himself, and lay down upon his bed. Sleep came then, and tortured him with dreams of slanting snow and thoughtless pleasure. Alas! Alas!

She went to the Philippines, because she had married a young officer. He himself was promoted twice that year, because as soon as he had systematized one department and thoroughly trained its office force, they put a less able man in there, and conferred upon him a higher and less well-ordered department. He went up and up towards the last in dizzying leaps, until at thirty-five he was one of the real "railway kings," with an uncounted fortune and a name that was world-wide.

Her father had given up his seat in Congress two years before. His health was very bad, his income not large. She had been widowed some time before the family quitted Washington, and had come home to live. She was thirty now.

And so now — to-night — he was standing in the reception room, waiting for her, knowing all that I have just recounted — but no more.

It was still outdoors, his chauffeur had moved off to do a trifling commission, and the snowy scene was left in frozen desolation. The houses opposite all had their shades drawn. He thought of a house, then building further down in the street, and swore that its windows should every one stream light and warmth abroad on every winter night.

Swish — wish — ish !

A silken skirt soft-flowing over a hardwood stair. He turned, feeling suddenly big and burly and awkward, and his muscles and nerves all pulled and tightened at the rustling sound.

Then she parted the portières and came in, a lovely little navy-blue figure with the yellow curls huddled together behind her ears, and her pretty eyes and her pretty smile just the same. Just the same, thank God !

"Oh, you have n't changed a bit !" she exclaimed joyfully, giving him her hand.

"I was just going to say the same thing," he replied with answering smile and warm hand-clasp.

If the world had ever been dull and gray it was all over now, and the best rays of life's best sun were illuminating him with their effulgence at that moment.

"But I've nothing to change *me*" — (drawing away her hand) — "while you — oh ! to think of it ! They always asked me if I knew you in Europe when they found out where I came from, and fancy how proud I was to be able to say yes."

THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS 65

They sat down, she keeping her eyes on him.

"And to think how rich you've grown! Do tell me how that feels. We used to be rich, and now we're poor, so I know how *that* feels; and don't mind it a bit, either," she added gaily.

Through his mind there passed like a warm glow the thought, "I could give her five thousand a year just to give to her parents, and five thousand more a year for herself, and never miss the money." But aloud he said:

"I never think about all that; I have to work too hard."

"But your mother? Does n't she enjoy having just everything *she* wants?"

"Well, I don't know. I sometimes think that she rather misses the sole execution of her own house-work."

"Where do you live now?"

He told her.

"But you're building a beautiful house; they showed it to me the other day out driving. A regular marble palace."

"Yes, I'm afraid it's rather a piece of folly." He looked down. He was seeing her in that uncompleted home of his, wrapped in pink and lace, against a background of velvet and treasures. His nouns and verbs of luxury were very limited, but the love and longing that conjured the picture were anything but limited. He almost gasped.

"It does seem like a big house for just a man and his mother, but you and your mother must not forget that you are a very big man now. You can't think how flattered I was when I saw your card — to think that you had remembered *me*, and come to call upon me too." She laid her sweet, earnest gaze straight into his as she spoke, and he could frame no reply for the tumult within him. The years had dimmed nothing, had assuaged nothing, had changed nothing in his feelings; but was she really speaking the truth? In her own heart did she really look *up* to him now? Oh, he wondered, daring not to believe.

To his perception the difference had never seemed so poignantly sharp before. He felt his large frame to be mere heaviness, and his every turn of head or hand uncouth. He had often stood before men of her class and controlled their minds with his as easily as he could those of his own kind. But here — where his life-blood oozed in the balance — before this frail, blue-eyed woman of bygone power and potency, thrice powerful to-day — he sat hopeless, helpless, scarlet, and wretched, in the fear that he showed it all — which he did not.

"Of course, when I knew you were back I meant to come at once," he said. His eyes kept devouring all the details of her appearance. She had on a simple evening frock of dark blue silk, and around her neck she wore a little necklet of cut jet, a relic

THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS 67

of her mourning doubtless. "She could have the biggest diamonds in all America!" he thought suddenly, and then hushed the thought so that he could hear her speaking again.

"I'm so glad that you felt so. I've often wanted to see you, even though I can read so much about you in the daily papers." She smiled courageously, even though admitting to herself that he had been easier to talk to on the coasting hill in those old days of childhood.

"If your mother does n't like big houses, what does she say to the new one?" she asked next.

"She hopes that it means that I am going to be married," he made answer, dry-throatedly.

"Oh, are you?" her interest was extreme at once.

He could not look at her. The blood was pouring into his heart. His strength was mighty, and yet he could not yet dare to dare; he knew *that* well.

"I don't know," he said, almost brokenly.

"Oh, you look so bashful and frightened, I believe that you are," she exclaimed laughing; "yes, I do believe it. I've found you out, have n't I?"

He raised his eyes painfully to the eager question of her glance. It was in such minutes in other days that the fates of certain nations were changed by the coquetry and the love-hunger of certain humans belonging to them.

Then he smiled a little distortedly. He was a strong man who had up to now wrought and racked

what he considered should be brought under order until it bent at his behest; but in this hour he was facing that before which he was helpless. The sweetest, fairest, blond enigma. Oh, what was she going to do with him?

"Tell me who it is," she begged. "Is it some one here? I suppose you can have any woman you want — almost Sultan-like — can't you? I don't suppose that any girl would refuse *you*."

"Don't you think so?"

"Why, I suppose not. They say that you'll be the richest man in all this country in ten years more. I don't care for money myself, but most women like it *so* much."

He looked at her a little dully.

"Don't you care for money?" he asked.

She shook her charming blond head.

"No, not a bit. It can't buy one thing that I care for. I married a poor man the first time, and we were very happy; and now (it's not out yet, but it won't hurt to tell *you*), I'm going to marry another poor man in the spring."

There was a little pause, then:

"You're going to marry again?" he asked, as if he had n't understood.

"Yes, in April."

There was another slight pause.

"Won't you congratulate me?" she suggested, then, with her pretty smile.

"Yes, certainly. I hope you'll be most happy."

She noticed how tightly his big hands held one another — almost as if he were suffering. Somehow he seemed pitiable in that moment, in spite of all his money. She felt like reaching forward and pressing those twisting hands gently into peace. But she only said in her softest voice:

"Thank you, and I wish you the same."

He started a little then.

"Me? — oh, don't think of me. I was only joking. I shall never marry."

"How can you say that — you are so young?"

"I've always said it. Away back in my boyhood I always knew it. Girls never took to me; you remember how it was in the coasting days?" His voice was hurried and shaking.

She looked at him anxiously, fancying a bitter echo in the unevenly spoken words.

"I was very fond of you," she remonstrated gently.

That was intolerable! He sprang to his feet, drawing a big breath as he did so. Oh, he *never* should have come near her again! But he had come — hoping, hoping. And now this was the end. This was the first hour of the weeks and months and years that were to come. In the present second he presaged their shadow down his whole path of life. Little smiling face laying him low in his boyhood — completing its havoc now.

"You were always awfully good to me," he exclaimed in hasty agony. "I'll remember your sweet little ways so long as I live. And let me beg you, don't ever fail to come to me if you ever want anything — if you ever get *too poor*, you know — or — or want anything."

"That's awfully kind of you," she said, surprised and startled by his emotion, but grateful for his friendliness. "I'm not to be married here, or I'd hope that you would know and like my — my —" she stopped, her voice died away, her eyes grew wide with a sort of anxiety over the look in the face before her. He rose at once.

"I've *got* to go," he said, with heavy emphasis. "I — I've lots to do. I'm always busy, you know."

She rose too. He looked with inward and upward contracting brows upon the slight girlish figure that would have shrunk to nothing in his arms. What must it be to own the light in her eyes, the love on her lips? A man had known, another was soon to know — and not he ever — never for him. Never! never!

Without a word he walked towards where he had seen the maid lay his overcoat. She followed.

"How lovely!" she said, drawing her fingers through the soft fur as he lifted it. "I suppose that you can just buy anything nowadays?"

"Not quite," he said, trying to smile.

THE PARTING OF THE CLOUDS 71

"I shall see you again, shall I not? You'll try and call again while we're here?"

He drew a single long, long breath.

"I'll try," he said.

"Papa would be so pleased."

He smiled with the same expression of subduing pain. They shook hands. Then he went out to his motor, entered the coupé, and sat down to face the wraith of disappointment alone and single-handed.

As the big machine whirled away through the snow, the railway king — a veritable king in power over men, and as powerless as all kings prove to be in another direction — clenched his teeth hard and drove his fingers fast together.

"I can find out about the fellow later," he said to himself, "and I can throw some things in his way that will bring them out where she can have all she wants; and if — if there's ever a — a little girl with blue eyes and yellow curls, I can give *her* enough, so I know she'll never want anything. . . ." He unfastened his fingers for an instant, and then bruised them against one another with fresh cruel force. "But that is n't going to help me any," he cried desperately. "Nothing's going to help me. I can fix up ever so many folks to be happy, but I'll have to go in and out alone myself till I die. Of course, some day mother'll be leaving me, and then I'll just live on and on and on alone. Always alone. And I don't want to live alone. I wanted *her*. I

wanted her to sit in that house like a queen, and just order what she fancied, and go where she pleased, and do what she pleased, and let me give her all I had. The money'd have done some good then. I'd have liked piling it up to pile it on *her* afterwards. But what's the use now? Nothing's any use." He paused, leaned his face in his hand and whispered: "Oh, if I could *only* have been born poor — and *her sort!*"

He felt for his pocket-handkerchief.

"I fancy I've taken cold," he murmured hoarsely.

The gray overhead has closed in again. Only a few minutes of sunlight after all.

Just a little parting — a little, little parting in the clouds.

A CHRISTMAS DEVOTEE

SHE stood in front of the window, looking in at the toys so beautifully displayed on the warm side of the big sheet of plate glass. The toys were bewilderingly pretty and of endless variety; apparently there was every kind and species known there. All kinds of animals and all sorts of games and all sizes of dolls. Overhead looped strands of ribbon interspersed with electric bulbs that made all the gold and silver used in the doll-jewelry and the horses' harnesses shine doubly. The floor within the window was covered with white cotton powdered with tinsel, and that sparkled, too. It was all a beautiful, heart-cheering sight, and she stood without and enjoyed it as much as — or perhaps more than — any other of the crowd that pressed about her. The wind blew sharply around the corner but she did not mind, she did not even seem to notice how it crept down her collar or up her cuffs. Her eyes were all intent upon the window and especially upon one horse and wagon that occupied a rather conspicuous position to the left.

"Looks almost like a real live horse," she said,

softly. "My goodness, but they do make those toy things nice now. They've sewed that skin so it just comes under the harness everywhere and not one seam shows that I can see. I think I must get that horse for the children that live next door. They'll play with it all winter long; they're such careful children, they'll never break it. They'll load blocks into that little wagon and make believe it's a milk wagon one day and an express wagon the next and they'll be just as happy as any children that have really got an express wagon and a milk wagon besides; happier, I guess, for they've played that a brick was a wagon and been happy with that for over a year. Being able to pretend things are other things is a great gift, anyway."

She tipped her head sideways just then to bear against a freshly nipping blast, and looked up at the dolls that were ranged on a sort of terrace above the animals.

"I want Mamie to have a doll like that pink one with the big bonnet," she said meditatively; "she wants a doll, I know, and I want her to have just what she wants this year, for she's a good child. She's named for my mother, Mamie is. I can just hear how my father used to call mother 'Mamie' when I was a little thing. Mamie's got her brown hair and eyes, too. She's a good child."

She smiled at the pink doll in a friendly way as she tucked her hands still further up into her sleeves.

"And I must remember to get a muff for Mrs. Mellen," she thought next, "she always looks cold because she has n't got a muff. I was noticing how she tried to keep her hands warm by tucking them into her sleeves the other day, but you can't keep your hands really warm that way. She ought to have a big comfortable squirrel muff, big enough to slip two or three little parcels into along with your purse. I saw just the thing in a window on the other side of the street as I came along this afternoon. Believe I'll look around and see if there's anything that would do her more good, but I don't believe there is. It's so bad to have your hands cold the whole time — it sort of seems as if it might take the heart out of you, if you were n't careful not to let it."

She looked up at the joyous decorations overhead and slowly back and forth over all the blooming doll faces and gay assortment of toys beneath once more.

"Too bad I forgot my list," she murmured, "I know I'm going to want some of those jointed animals, but I can't remember who for just at this minute. Billy'll want one of the trapeze things, I know. He'll break his neck yet taking chances, but then he's strong and well and that's all I care about. Billy's a fine boy."

Reluctantly she turned from the toys and moved on to the next window, where was exhibited a bounteous feast spread out upon a table in the midst

of a cheerful little dining room. Holly wreaths hung on the walls and red bells dangled from the looped evergreens overhead. It was a pretty picture.

"I ought to be at home making mince-meat this minute," she reflected as she looked. "I do wish I was n't such a hand to love to look in windows. Only a week till Christmas and my mince-meat not even begun. I wonder what my mother would have said to such doings. I must have a pudding, too, this year — children love a pudding — and I must save some plums for the turkey dressing; everybody likes plums in the turkey dressing. I know I do myself. I like the way those bows of red ribbon are tied to the chairs — guess I'll fix my chairs that way; and the star over the sideboard is a mighty pretty idea for over the sideboard. I can buy one all made, I suppose, or if I can't I can make it myself; it don't look hard at all."

With a look of earnest interrogation at the star as if in appeal as to how it had gotten itself made, she moved on to the next opening. It was that of the big entrance doors, continually swinging in and out. She paused her steps. .

"I'll go inside the vestibule for a minute and get warm. It's so cold outside if you stop to think."

So she went in and stood for a few minutes in the large vestibule where a dozen women were stopping to tie on veils, tuck small tots into carriages, or arrange their armfuls of many-shaped parcels as com-

pactly as possible before going forth to fight the wind and the crowd.

"There 's a baby just like mine, bless his rosy-cheeked heart. I don't see how anyone can live without a baby — I really don't. Look at his little fists in his little mittens, and his cunning cap pulled down over his cunning head."

She was so lost in admiring contemplation of the small child that the mother had to say "If you please," to get by her, and out the door.

Then she turned to the inner windows, which were literally lined with books, and was again happy.

"Oh, see that set of Dickens! I believe I'll get that for a kind of family present all around. I do believe everyone is better for reading Dickens, and it 'll be so pleasant nights by the fire; and there's a Doré Bible. I always wanted one of those, the pictures are so splendid; and I want 'Little Women' for the girls. I remember when I read that first myself I could n't have been more than ten years old."

As she stood looking at the books with eyes that swept lovingly over each in turn, a great outflow of shoppers suddenly reminded her that it must be that six o'clock and the hour for shutting up shop had come. She went out then, too, back into the street again, and after a last long glance at each of the inviting windows, turned her steps away from

the busy bustle—away towards the quiet residence portion of the city.

The street that she sought was not well lighted, and the houses that bordered it were dark and constantly grew smaller, but she went as blithely on as ever.

"I do love Christmas," she murmured, hugging herself partly to try and get her hands still deeper into one another's sleeves, and partly with a simple overflow of ecstasy. "I like it better every year. It's such fun to shop. It's such fun to pick out just what I want to get for everyone. It's so nice and makes me feel so good. I do love Christmas."

She came just then to a narrow, dingy brick house and mounted the steps and fumbled at the lock.

"Guess I'd better be looking for muffs for myself," she declared merrily, "my hands seem about frozen. I always forget to go in to warm when I ought."

The door opened at last, and she climbed a dark stair and entered a dark room. There was a match safe nailed to the door and she soon had scratched a match and lighted a lamp.

It was a tiny room and poorly furnished — just the barest necessities and three or four pictures cut out of magazines and pinned to the wall. One of a pretty little girl had "Mamie" printed in pencil beneath it, another of a sturdy boy with a baseball bat in his hands was labeled "Willy," and over where the lamp illumined most was pinned a baby face.

The Christmas shopper glanced tenderly from one to another as she unpinned her poor bonnet and unfastened her worn collar at the throat.

"Always seems good to get home. I never can be glad enough for being a real home body. I was brought up to sing 'Be it ever so lowly there's no place like home,' and I've proved it 's so."

She went to hang up her coat, and while she was in the small closet there came a tap at the door.

"Come in," she cried.

The door opened, and a tall, spare woman came in.

"I meant to stop you going up, but you must have come in when I was out in the yard getting wood," she said; "I wanted to tell you that we are going to Hannah's after all. The boy has n't got scarlet fever at all."

The woman who had done so much shopping almost clapped her hands. "Oh, I'm so glad," she said, "I truly am so glad. Glad he has n't got the fever, and glad for you to go. Now you pack right up and get off as soon as ever you can, and I'll be just as happy as can be and keep everything straight here till you come back."

"Oh, they want you, too," said the spare woman. "That's what I was in such a hurry to tell you. Hannah wrote herself. She says they look on you as one of the family."

"Not really!" The shining eyes were shining wet.

"Yes, really."

"She don't want me for Christmas?"

"Yes, she does. You're to go with me and stay as long as we do and come back with us."

They stood opposite each other for a long minute.

"I have n't been in the middle of a real Christmas since I was little myself," said the woman who loved Christmas so dearly at last. "I declare I have n't any words to say how I feel."

"Well, you put your things to rights while I get supper, and then we'll talk about it," said the other.

And then she went away and left her.

For a little while there was silence, and then as "Mamie" on the wall looked down upon the packing that began at once, she heard this little soliloquy delivered in a tone that made it almost a prayer to the Giver of every Christmas:

"I'm so glad I was born happy. I'm so glad I can get so much fun out of picking out presents even if I have n't any money to buy 'em, or anybody of my own to give them to. I'm always happy thinking how much pleasure I'd give if I did have anyone and I'm always happy thinking how much pleasure my children would give me if I had any children. I'm content to think that I was born one of those who'd give if they could, instead of one of those poor unfortunates that could give if they wanted to and don't ever think anything about it. I can't ever be grateful enough for that. To think how I've just lived on thinking about how things maybe might

have been and now to think that after all my Christmas shopping and planning I'm really and truly going to a house where there'll be real children looking at a real tree, and where they'll all be having a real Christmas! And to think I'll see it with my eyes and hear it with my ears, and to think that they look on me as if I was really 'one of the family.' I declare I don't know what I've ever done to be so happy as this."

She looked about on the three little paper faces and smiled on each in turn.

"I hope it is n't selfish in me to be like this," she said, and for a minute her smile was clouded. But then she sat down on her shabby little sofa-bed and drew a long sigh, and it was not a sad sigh at all.

"I always have said that it's better to be born lucky than rich," she confessed — and her eyes shone bright with the spirit that had deserved much and gotten little — "now I've proved it."

WHO IS SHE?

Do you believe in fairies?

I do.

Do you want to know why I believe in fairies?

Listen, and I will tell you.

I believe in fairies because I have one. Yes, I have really a fairy; if you do not think that I am speaking the truth I will tell you all about it — all about me, and all about where I live, and all about my fairy — my own sweet, true fairy.

Firstly, then, I am a peasant woman of Touraine in France. I wear a close, white muslin cap and two wooden shoes. My face is brown, but my hands and my bare ankles are much browner, for even in winter I have neither gloves nor stockings. For I am very poor and work very hard always.

Then, as to where I live. I live in one little corner of the great house out upon the Angers road. The great house is empty and still, and in the stables are no horses at all. But in the maisonette between the great house and the stables are living creatures — Manette the goat, and Co-co, the rooster and his family; — also my rabbits — also my doves. And

behind the maisonette is my little garden with its rows of vegetables and border of currant bushes. I used to live by myself in my little, lonely corner of the big, silent house and raise what I ate; what I could not eat I sold to pay for what I wore. So you can think why many days seemed hard to me and why many nights, after I had thanked God for all His goodness, I was ungrateful enough to still weep a little in the darkness, because I so longed to have someone to share my solitude. I never dared hope or pray for a companion and fully expected to live my life out alone, but it seems as if when one works hard and tries to do what is right God hears the secret heart-wishes. I know that He heard mine for — although at first I hardly noticed the gradual changes — it was little by little borne in upon me that a holy magic was at work in my life.

And now for a long time it has gone like this: —

In the morning when I rise I first of all open the blinds so that the sunbeams may enter freely, and then I kneel for my prayers. I have ever three prayers to repeat and thus: I say the first one, then I am silent while the second prayer says itself there beside me, — then I repeat the third, and my day is begun.

I have now to dress me. My dressing is very simple, and yet wonderful, for if by chance my comb slips from my fingers or a pin falls to the floor I have never to stoop — they come again to my hand. My

wooden shoes run to my feet, my muslin bonnet flies from the table — I find myself so quickly dressed because I have a fairy with me, you know.

Next there is my bed to make! I go on one side of the bed and throw a coverlet across it — upon the other side the coverlet smooths itself out at once. I put a pillow in place — the other pillow leaps to its own position on the opposite side. Behold my bed all in order, and I have hardly moved.

Next I hasten below to feed my family in the maisonnette. By the well hang three pails, a large one and two smaller. I draw up water and fill all three, and then I take two in my own hands and go to give Manette and the chickens their morning drink. I could not carry three pails at once and so one might well suppose that the rabbits must wait thirsty until I return. But not so! My fairy is there, and the third pail hastens along at my side and pours itself out for the rabbits while I am busy beyond.

Then I must bring Manette out into the field and tether her there for the day, and feed the rabbits their fresh green leaves, and the chickens their grain. It takes quite a while, but I sing as I do it because when I am through and return to the kitchen I find that fairy hands have not only gathered the eggs from all the nests, but have laid the pile of sticks close by the little brick oven all ready for my little morning fire.

I prepare my breakfast at once — and I think

that you may laugh at me but still I must tell you that I always cook a double portion and place a second bowl and spoon upon the table. Although I know that you will disbelieve, still I assure you most seriously that *the porridge disappears out of the other bowl quite as rapidly as it does out of my own.*

Afterwards I have the dishes to wash and then (I must really laugh because it is most amusing) I put a towel on a low bench and as fast as I wash anything and place it by the towel, it dries itself as rapidly as possible and runs away fast to the closet. Sometimes when the pieces are small two run away together; but the big pot never runs — he goes very slowly, and when he is safe upon the shelf I always hear my fairy give a big sigh of relief.

While I am cleaning the kitchen the gate-bell rings and I know that the baker's boy is there with my loaf of daily bread. In the sad time of long ago I had ever to run fast out to the gate to prevent his being kept waiting, but now I do not disturb myself at all. I only look from the kitchen window and smile to see the gate open itself and the long loaf come hurrying into the house, seek its cloth, wrap itself up neatly, and hop into the cupboard all alone.

Then comes the labor in the garden. There are always many things to do among the plants and vines, but my fairy never wearies. I pull weeds, and beside me other weeds pull themselves; I scrape with my rake, and beyond there the ground loosens

itself: I dig where the earth is packed down hard by the rain, and when I go farther on I find that the earth beyond there has also been freshly turned.

So the morning passes, and after the noonday meal I bring my linen-mending out by the shade of the laurel hedge and seat myself to sew — and then the Wonder of Wonders comes to pass!

As I sew, my eyes are closed and a sound like the lulling and thrilling of the nightingale comes to my ears. I cry out to know what has happened, and there comes around from behind me the drollest little figure wearing a funny little dress like my own only much smaller, a tiny white muslin cap, and two wee wooden sabots. She laughs afresh, she leans on my knee, she kisses me, she hugs me.

And I know not which I find the most wonderful, my morning fairy or my afternoon darling, the helpful hands or the laughing little girl.

Now do you doubt me when I say that I believe in fairies? Who would not believe? Don't you?

If you are a mother you surely have a fairy just like mine, and if you are a little girl you *are* a fairy and can make your mamma's days just such as I have written of here.

Only try!

A TRUE WOMAN

THEY did not call her that when they led me in to look upon her for the first time. No one spoke the words that afterward became the bane of my existence. Not a "true woman," but just a little budding soul was she that hour. I shall never forget the surrounding hush, the sweet, holy stillness that closed in about my first glimpse of her — "the baby."

There were only three others in the room — three besides her and me. They were uncle, who had brought me from school that day, nurse, and Tauntie. They all were quiet, and watched me earnestly. I think, looking back now, that they thought that I was jealous, because I stood so still for so long a time, and did n't say a word.

But I was not jealous — I hope that I never am, or have been, really jealous, but I certainly was not then, at least. I was only full of the marvel of the wee thing, and all wonder over her utter helplessness. The jealousy — if jealousy it really was — came later, ten minutes later; and then it was born and died in the same breath — a mere lightning flash of pain, so to speak. It came when I went to

Tauntie's bedside and asked in a whisper, "Whose is it?" I wanted to know to whom the baby belonged. I did not know yet whether "it" was boy or girl, but I knew that as it was so new, it must belong to a mother and father, because they had never ceased telling me that when I myself was new I had a mother for a few days and a father for a year.

It always seemed to me such a pity that I should have had them when I was too small to appreciate them; and, although I loved Tauntie dearly, my heart longed so over the whole father and mother subject that my first thought in regard to the baby was that when I knew who was its father and who was its mother, I could then go back to the little white cradle and whisper in the little pink ear: "Try to remember them as hard as you can, for fathers and mothers may be gone before you think." You see, I was fearfully interested in fathers and mothers — interested as only an affectionate orphan boy can be.

So I asked Tauntie softly: "Whose is she?" And Tauntie, with first a flash of radiant joy, and then a sort of pale white glory on her sweet face, drew me close, and said:

"Jamie, she is mine. She is my own. She is my baby. I am her mother."

And it was then there came that ugly stab of jealousy — if it was jealousy — for in all the four years that I had lived with Tauntie I had been the only child in the house. I suppose, looking back

now, that they had quite expected me to be jealous, and were not surprised when my eyes grew dark; but the jealousy went up like a flame and died down even quicker, because in the same instant that it blazed so hotly within me I felt Tauntie folding my hand against her bosom, and heard her saying:

“But she is uncle’s, too, dear; and yours the most of all, for it will be you that she will love best. Only think of that, Jamie! Only think of that!”

I can never forget the sensation given me by those words, never in my life, never till I die — no; and not then! I am sure that after I am dead and on down through ages and æons of ages to come they will still echo in my soul: “For it will be you that she will love the best of all!” Wonderful words to ring in the ears of a child who had no one of his own on all the wide earth, who had been carried home by his guardian out of sheer pity; who was just arrived at the age when he began to realize what belonging to no one meant.

I drew my hand quickly free and ran back to the little white cradle and looked, with my heart beating as if it would burst, down at the one who was to love me best of all. I could not keep back my tears, although I drove both my fists hard into my eyes. It was too good to believe. It was out of the Fairy Book. And yet it must be true, because Tauntie had said it.

The first thing I knew I burst out sobbing, and

they led me from the room. Uncle took me into the garden and down by the bit of water, and there tried to comfort me, always supposing that I resented her coming. And then it was there — when I had corrected his mistake and explained my happiness brokenly — that he promised her love to me, just as Tauntie had done.

The tears came into his own eyes as he held me on his knee there on the green bench by the water, and I cried again as I tried to thank him for giving me the baby which he had only had for a few brief days himself. But we were both very happy behind our tears, notwithstanding, and, later, we went back to the big, quiet room where they two were, and I had another look at her. She was still asleep, and — oh, she was so sweet! Her cradle was sweet, and the very air around it was sweet. I held an end of one of the hanging ribbons in my fingers, and it seemed as if I were touching her little soft hair. Uncle and I had tea together downstairs afterwards, and I could n't speak at all; and then the next day I went back to school — a very happy boy.

I did not see her again for a long time. Tauntie sent me a picture some months later, and I kept it locked in my box. She looked sleepy still, but she was getting bigger, and I was to see her, come the Easter holiday. And when the Easter holiday came, I did see her, and I held her, too. She was a very little baby, a good deal like a doll, and so soft and

warm! They had named her Dorothea, and they called her Thea; and she could smile, and she smiled on me.

Then I grew and she grew, and the years went quickly by until she grew into the cunningest and funniest of fat little chickens, always running at the heels of some one, and wanting to do exactly whatever she saw big people do. I never saw anything quite so small and so active, and she did love me — she loved me the best of all, just as Tauntie had promised me on that first day. Every minute that my holiday lasted she wanted to be with me. She cried — cried for *me* — when nurse carried her away to bed; and if I begged for her to stay, she would climb in behind me on the sofa, and cuddle there contentedly. She wanted to be with me every minute and everywhere. If I went out on the bit of water, she and nurse had to go, too; if I went to feed the deer, she ran along beside me; she was always with me.

The last thing every evening was for us all three to go and kiss her in her crib, and when she was entirely kissed and laid smoothly on her pillow, she used to sit up again quickly, like a darling little yellow-curled Jack-in-the-box, and cry: "Tiss, tiss!" till I went back and kissed her once again. Nobody but I would do.

This was the summer that uncle took me alone and talked so long and earnestly with me about my

own life. And that same day, towards evening, he walked with me through the wood and over the stream to the "Other House," as we always called it, and explained to me that that was my house, and that when I grew to be a man I would go there to live.

It was bewildering, and made my heart ache; and I was glad when we went home and found everything just as usual, and I could laugh over Thea and her doll. She was so desperately fond of the doll, and was forever hugging and kissing it, and insisting on our hugging and kissing it. It was a horrid old bundle of rags, but that made no difference.

"It's so dirty," I said to Tauntie; but Tauntie only smiled.

"It's the woman in her, Jamie dear," she said softly. "She is a true woman, thank Heaven! Let her hug her dolly all she likes, I love to see her so tender-hearted for what she caresses."

Uncle rather shared my view of the doll, I think. He said that he only wished that she loved Sport as well, Sport was her dog. But Tauntie said again: "No; the doll is best. She is a true little woman, and knows where to love."

"But it's such an awfully ugly doll," uncle said, "and Sport is such a good fellow."

He pulled Sport's ears and laughed as he spoke, but Thea kept on hurrying her doll-cab back and

forth on the terrace, and smiling at us whenever she passed us by. She never could even wheel her doll slowly — she did everything in a headlong baby rush.

I'm afraid that it was really an awfully ugly doll, an uncommonly frayed and soiled production. I ought to know, for I helped put on its bonnet and shawl often enough; but none of its faults of physiognomy counted to Thea, who remained as devoted as ever in her daily care of it. However, I spent my next summer in France, and before I returned, I bought her the prettiest doll in the world. It had brown eyes like her own, and they turned quickly from side to side, very much as hers did, too. I saw it looking sideways at me out of the great crowd of doll-smiles, and I knew it at once, and bought it and carried it home in my box, and gave it to her myself. She was too overawed with its magnificence to speak at first, and then when she had been persuaded to try to hold it and had gotten it into her arms with great success, she just held it tight, and utterly refused to say "Thank you!" to me. Tauntie tried and uncle tried, in spite of my pleading that she did n't need to thank me; but we all wasted our breath, for Thea had made up her mind not to say "Thank you!" And so they wanted to take the doll away from her, but I could n't allow that. She knew very well that I was hers to thank or not to thank just as she pleased. And so she held

her doll tight in her arms and laughed in their faces, and I backed her rebellion.

"She will be worse than Tauntie if she is allowed to go on like that!" uncle said severely.

And Tauntie said: "She has just your disposition, and, of course, with your disposition she is going to be terrible to manage."

Then we all laughed, and Thea was so happy over her victory that she danced all over the room, her little frilly skirts flopping up and down, and her chubby little knees looking just like the doll's own.

The next summer they sent me to Germany, and when I came back I had only two short days before getting off to school again.

Oh, but she was sweet that time! At first she would have nothing to do with me; and then she made up and went and brought her kitten to show me. It was jet black, with yellow eyes, and she carried it about upside down in her arms, and smoothed its tail out straight from time to time. The tail always curled back to the same position as before, but she was very patient and presently straightened it out again. She was terribly devoted to the kitten. She did n't kiss it, thank Heaven, but she talked about it all the time, and let it play with her curls. She would not let me touch her curls, or toss her, or anything, and seemed to take a vicious delight in showing me how kind she could be — to a cat.

"I'm afraid she is a sad coquette," Tauntie said.

And I knew what coquette meant, and got the worst stab I had had since the day when I first made her acquaintance. "But it's only the woman in her, dear," Tauntie went on, with a smile for my frown. "She likes to tease you."

"But why does she?" I asked.

"Just because she is a woman," explained Tauntie, and said no more.

I went out in the garden after tea, and there Thea followed me with the everlasting cat in her arms. I had a little locket for her, with a little Kodak of myself in my football suit, and had had the picture taken small on purpose. I had waited until we should be alone to give it to her, and now I took it out of my pocket and showed it to her. She looked at it without any interest, straightening the cat's tail as she did so.

"Ladies wear lockets like this," I said, trying to beguile her attention.

"When I'm a lady," she said, looking tenderly down into the cat's black, furry face, "I hope I'll have a baby; and when I have a baby I hope it will look just *esackly* like my cat."

I felt that it was a hopeless case, but I opened the locket, and showed her the picture, and then put the whole in her hand.

"I'll take this pickshure out and put in my cat's," said Thea. "Will you make a pickshure of my cat to go in this sing to-morrow?"

Heaven was so kind as to let it rain on the morrow, and I did not have to photograph my rival; but I was so vexed that I had to disburden my mind to Tauntie after dinner that evening.

Tauntie just smiled.

"She's a true little woman, dear, that's all," she said, repeating the phrase which I was beginning to detest most heartily. "You must be patient with her."

"If it were only a *white* kitten," I said, outraged; and at that Tauntie laughed heartily.

Thea outgrew the kitten before I came home again, and then grew up to, and then through, and out of, no end of other experiences. She learned to ride, and made no secret of preferring the pony to me. And then she learned to fence, and told me in strict confidence that she thought the fencing-master the handsomest man in the world — except her own father. I betrayed her confidence to Tauntie as quickly as was possible, and she never saw that fencing-master again. I had that much joy, anyhow.

And then came the three years that I did not see her at all — those dreadful three years! It was a long succession of accidents, but it was very terrible. I finished college, and uncle was the only one who was there to witness my triumphs; for I had a lot of glory, and had worked like a dog so as to impress Thea with what a B.A. and Head of the River really meant. But Tauntie was taken ill, and they two

went to Switzerland and stayed all summer. I expected to go there and join them, but one thing after another hindered. And then that winter they sent me off. Oh, well, it's no use going into that chain of miseries! And the worst of them all was that she never wrote me one line in all the three years.

It was ghastly! In the end I had to go out to the very Farthest East, and when I got there I had to stay there. And she made her *début*, and was presented and all, with me manacled to the other side of the world. I almost went mad. I heard constantly how beautiful she was, and what a belle; and I burned with an agony of fear and jealousy through the whole twelvemonth that followed after.

And then when I was at last free to return, I had that long crazing journey back. The longest journey of my life, I hope and trust. And I was n't sure but that I should find her betrothed when I came to its end. It's a bad thing to be in love, anyhow; but to be in love ever since the beginning of one's memories, and to have nothing else in the world except that love, is to quit sleeping and eating, and doing everything towards the end of three desperate years. I know.

I landed finally, and hurried down, dreading to find the house full of company — of men who would absorb her and her time. But they were alone as good luck would have it, and Tauntie was on the

terrace waiting for me. She was as pretty as ever, and so kind and loving!

"Thea is in the garden somewhere," she said, after the first ten minutes of our talk. "Go out, and bring her in to tea." Then she looked at me, and I fancied tears in her voice as she said: "You will find her greatly changed, but you must not be surprised at that. Three years is a long time."

"I suppose —" I began. And then I stopped, not at all knowing what I had meant to say.

Tauntie laid her hand on mine.

"But, Jamie," she said, very, very softly, "take my word for it that the little loving girl is not gone. She lives somewhere, I know. Have much patience."

Her words made me cold and hot all at once. I got up and went and leaned over her chair-back and kissed her. She was my mother, to all intents and purposes; and even if that had not been so, she was Thea's mother, and to be adored on that account alone. And then I went to find Thea.

As I crossed the bit of turf that lay between the terrace and the hedge, I tried to nerve myself to the knowledge that, in spite of Tauntie's words, the little girl was gone, and that a woman walked there beyond in the garden — a woman who held my life in her hands.

I knew now how much she meant to me. The three years had been full of learning for me. As I

passed under the rose-laden arch that pierced the hedge a little further on, I saw her coming directly towards me. She was all in white, and radiantly beautiful, and her hair was tied down in her neck with a little black velvet ribbon.

I said "Thea!" and held out my hand. I thought that, of course, I should kiss her as I had always done; but as I touched her hand I knew that I could n't. She was altogether changed.

She threw me away (far away) with her very first look, and taught me my place in the scale of her humble servants directly.

"I thought you were Captain Corrie," she said, in a tone as if I might have happened to be almost any man. "He usually rides over once or twice a week. Dear me! And so it's you."

Such was my greeting after three years of maddest dreams by day and by night! Heavens! I could have fainted for lack of blood. Goodness knows where it all went to; but it left me quite weak, and my heart sank entirely out of existence.

"Yes; you are like Captain Corrie," she said then, looking me over with a chill cruelty, "only he has n't a mustache."

"Would you like me without one?" I asked. •

I got a sad shock when I heard my voice, for I had n't the faintest idea of saying anything at all; and the idea of my saying a thing like that was preposterous.

"I don't know," she said, even more carelessly than before. "You've always had a mustache, have n't you? Not that it matters."

We were walking in the garden now, although I did n't know it; and I suppose she expected me to make some reply; but I did n't know that, either, and so presently she spoke again:

"How you've changed!"

"I was thinking the same of you," I said, finding my tongue. "Oh, Thea, how you have changed!"

"Yes; I've grown up since you left, have n't I? I was quite a little girl three years ago."

"I should hardly have known you," I said.

Then she stopped, and a little flash of her old self jumped in her eyes.

"Am I improved, do you think?" she asked. "Tell the truth now."

"No; I don't think that you are," I said miserably.

She grew quite sober at that, and I was afraid for a minute that I had hurt her. I wanted to say something to set my crooked phrase straight, but before I could manage my thoughts she drove everything out of my head.

"It's because I'm thinking of getting married," she said. "Did mamma tell you?"

I don't know whatever held me sane enough to be able to say: "No; she left that for you." But I did manage to say it somehow.

"Captain Corrie is such a nice man," she went on

reflectively. "He has rented Shaftsbury Manor. Of course, that is n't as if he owned it, is it?"

"No," I said, my voice wailing in my own ears.

"But it is a nice place," she said, in a business-like, matter-of-fact way. "Steam pipes, you know, and new stables. But I don't know why I go into all this. I'm not thinking of marrying Captain Corrie, of course."

She set my brain swimming afresh.

"Why not?" I asked, seeing rainbows without reason.

"Why, he is married!"

"Oh!" I said. I saw now that she really was cruel as well as cold, and I knew that I ought to hate her — but I could n't. "Who is it, then?" I asked.

She hesitated.

"Go on and tell me," I said. "I am so interested."

She stopped again and turned her head and looked at me, and then turned her face away. We were down at the furthest end of the rose-lane, and my mind went back to when we had stood there last time — the summer before I went away. She had been a girl of sixteen, and, as a sort of good-bye promise, she had shown me the locket — the little locket of long ago — and then slipped it back inside the ruffle of her dress.

"Tell me who it is to be, Thea," I said, trying hard to sound cheerful, although I could hardly get my breath. "I'm very interested."

I had to wait a long, an interminably long, time before she said anything. And she did not speak at first; she just put her hand out in a blind sort of way, and I took it, because she seemed to expect that I should do so; and it did not seem to me that the other fellow ought to mind. Her hand was so cold that it frightened me; and then I felt that she was gasping for breath, quite as I was myself.

We stood like that for one long, painful minute, and then she put her hand to her throat and pulled the little locket out from her collar. As she did so, she looked straight up into my face, and said: "The same as ever," and burst into tears.

.
We were awfully late to tea.

.
After dinner that evening, we walked in the rose-garden again, and I asked her how she could have found it in her heart to torture me like that. And she laughed and laughed, and declared, her face against my arm, that she did it to see if I cared.

Cared!

"But, Thea," I said, "I've always cared, and you've always known it."

"Well, then, it was because I'm a true woman," she said, still laughing. "Oh, it was so nice to hear your voice shake, and see your eyes look so! And to know how happy I was going to make you — because" — she said, interrupting herself — "I am

going to make you ever and ever so happy. You may not believe it — but I am.”

“Then, Thea dear,” I said, laughing with her, “please never be a true woman any more. I love you every other way, but since you came, whenever you’ve made me wretched, I’ve been assured that it was just because you were a true woman. No more of that, *please*.”

She let me kiss her; but I could not get her to promise to refrain from her one bad habit; and I saw that I must let it go, and risk its latent perils; and so in the autumn we were married.

How Thea looked that day, and how I felt, and how, after it was all over, we walked down through the rose-garden under the moon, and took possession of the Other House for all the years to come — ah, that’s quite too wonderful to tell about! But it is true, nevertheless, and into the Other House came no manner of torment, nothing but most utter and complete bliss.

Until just the other day. The other day the old misery cropped madly out again. Perhaps I *am* jealous, after all. At any rate, I had a month of fighting the doubt until it seemed to me to have grown into a conviction, and my fear to have become living fact. And so, at last, it drove me to seek my old safe refuge in trouble — to go to Tauntie.

I left Thea rampant in her wrong-doing, and tried in vain to calm my pain and bring myself to reason

as I went through the wood and up the well-known path among the roses.

I found Tauntie in her morning-room embroidering, with her usual sweet, happy expression. She was glad to see me, and I dragged a chair close and sat down there, and told her all about it.

When I was through she became very thoughtful, and sat so still, that finally, out of sheer desperation, I asked if I might smoke. She said yes; and continued quiet and thoughtful while I was scratching the match and lighting the cigarette and blowing its end into a blaze; and then, when I was through, she was ready with her comfort.

"My dear boy," she said, "you must be patient. I know it's hard — but she does love you best. What I told you long ago is true — you are the dearest of all; you do not need to worry. It is only that while he is so little she cannot but give herself wholly up to him. Her heart, for the time being, enfolds his need rather than yours. It's her divine right, Jamie; it's in her, and she cannot help it. Some women are born to be women before anything else. Don't you remember the doll? Don't you remember the kitten? There is nothing wrong in Thea these days; all will straighten out in a month or two. It's only that she is more than ordinarily a true woman. And he is so little — so little, and needs her so sadly. Later, she will be all yours again. Only have patience!

She made me feel ashamed of my jealousy — if it was jealousy; she made me almost content with what was going on in the Other House.

I went back there a little while after, and found Thea lying on her couch. She looked so tired and pale that my heart smote me bitterly. I asked after my rival with unfeigned earnestness; and when I found that he slept safely at a distance, I went down on my knees beside her whom we shared between us, and confessed my sin and was forgiven.

"You shall be anything you like hereafter," I promised her. "Do what pleases you, and that is what will please me."

Thea smiled faintly.

"The doctor says that we must go away for a week or so for a little change," she said. "Would it be troubling you too much if I asked you to take me?"

Troubling me too much!

Three or four minutes later, when her question had been properly answered, I asked: "And where do you want to go, darling? You must choose, you know."

I was looking down into her eyes, and I saw them narrow wickedly, and all the mischief in her burst forth in dimples.

"I cannot help it, dear," she said, so low that I had to lay my face against her lips to hear, "I am a true woman. Take me to Paris!"

THE MYSTERIOUS MAN

GERARD sat under the big, old, queer, crooked apple-tree, and knit his brows, and wondered about the mysterious man and how he ever came to be so queer.

Miss Temple was in love with him—that he knew right well—for Gerard was deeply versed as to love in spite of his very tender years, and was especially versed as to the love that may lie between the man-heart and the woman-heart.

He owed this knowledge to his father, who had taught him what God's best gift is, through the medium of a passionate tenderness that had sought for eight long years to give forth a father's wise strength and a mother's brooding gentleness—both all alone by himself.

But the love of which his father had taught was surely quite another sort from that in which the mysterious man and Miss Temple were interested, and the difference puzzled the small boy, for his father was everything to him, and, being everything to him, had never ceased to impress upon him that all the closeness and sweetness of their affectionate

union was only a presage — a promise — of another union to be his later on when he should have become a man, and if he should have become a good and worthy one.

Gerard, sitting on his father's knee, his head against his father's bosom, his fingers clasped about the locket that hung from his father's watch chain, had learned and listened almost every night of his life to such teaching. How he must play and grow up big and strong, that he might be able to work for her — his future wife. How he must study hard, so as to some day know enough to earn her living. How he must protect the weak and help the unfortunate, so as to be fit to protect and help her. How he must use every day, hour, minute of his life to the very best advantage, so as to be able to feel that he had done his utmost to deserve her.

For a large man, with a heavy mustache and deeply sunken gray eyes, his father had a very lovely way of telling all this; and often and often Gerard, putting his face up for the final kiss before he went to bed, found himself wondering why, when woman-love was so beautiful a gift, there was not more of it for papa and himself.

It seemed to him that, if it had come once because his father deserved it, it ought to come again; and he could not make out why it had never done so. He longed to ask his father the direct question, but in spite of their close intimacy there was always a

sort of sacred veiling around this subject; and the child felt that it was a thing to be believed in without question. And so he did not question — he only believed.

But he had naturally been quick to divine, when Miss Temple talked of the man, that “the man” was the man that she loved; and as days passed on and on, and she talked more and more of the man, he — Gerard — became more and more bewildered at the dissimilarity between his father’s idea of love and that of Miss Temple.

He was staying in the country for the summer — staying with his foster mother while his father made a business trip to New York — and Miss Temple was boarding next door. Miss Temple was a pretty, pale young lady, and interested herself very much in her little neighbor, reading to him, and taking him with her to walk at first, and then later making an almost constant companion of him. They studied botany together, and lay on the ground and watched ants together, and even picked up a very elementary smattering of astronomy together during their evening strolls.

It had not taken many days of such *bonne camaraderie* to cause Gerard to pour out his little heart at her knee; and something in the sweet simplicity of that outpouring had led Miss Temple to pour out her own in return. But the exchange showed plainly that her ideas of love, while of quite as decided a

character as those of Gerard's father, were of a strangely different quality. Finding her young companion to be so astonishingly well versed as to the general outlines of the subject, Miss Temple gave him her own conception with great distinctness; and it was this view of hers that so disturbed Gerard.

His father's theory had been one of constant upward striving to be worthy of a certain reward; but Miss Temple's theory was that, if you believed strongly enough in a man, the man *must* be worthy your belief without any apparent labor on his own part at all. She cited as an example of her meaning that if, for instance, you were positive that a man could stop gambling, he would stop—if you were positive enough. If he did not stop gambling it was your own fault, because you evidently had not been positive enough.

She did not follow out this astonishing premise by stating that therefore all the evils of the world were altogether the fault of humanity's lack of belief in one another; but Gerard, receiving this new light on love with a primary shock over the surprise that love was ever called upon to deal with anyone imperfect—except one's own self—felt vaguely upset in all his theories, because his father had taught him that endless effort was necessary if one were to be made worthy of that blessing, and had never said a word about the possibility of the end being won through the possible efforts of somebody else.

It appeared that Miss Temple's conception of love being only a means of redeeming some one unworthy was an altogether different order of things; and Gerard, who was not stupid, felt much confused. His father was too far away to consult; and, oddly enough, there was in regard to Miss Temple's confidences that same air of the subject being too sacred to dispute or question of which he had been so often conscious before. So he could only glance up into her sweet, slightly saddened face, and try to understand why she, who should have been the sort of queen and crown, was instead the one to do such apparently very hard work. For that it was hard work he could not doubt.

"You see, Gerard," she said one day, "when no one but you believes in a man, you have to believe for the whole wide world if you are to help him really. You have to believe in him night and day, sleeping and waking, every single second of your life." Her tone as she spoke was very earnest; and one needed not to be very old to see and hear that, beyond a shadow of doubt, believing by night and by day, sleeping and waking, through every second of her life, had been very wearing.

If Gerard had been much older he might have guessed rather sooner than he did at all that ran between her lines from the pallor of Miss Temple's face and the big sadness of her eyes. There was a steadfast sorrow in them that would surely have led

a grown-up to see that she had often been sadly lacking in belief, and that as a natural result the poor man had often gone back to gambling. This failure on her part was plainly stamped on her features, and would have wrung the heart of any fellow-believer in the ultimate triumphant strength of frailty. But no grown-up could have denied Gerard's precocious wisdom in suspecting Miss Temple of loving — and that most deeply — some certain mysterious man. Just as Gerard knew that his father's life centred in the past that had left him only a face in a locket, so Gerard knew that Miss Temple's life centred in the man whom she only lived to believe in.

But it was many weeks before he ever heard her refer directly to him, and then it was Captain Holt who brought up the subject. Captain Holt was a second cousin of Miss Temple's, and came up from town to see her one day. They went out to walk, and took Gerard with them; and during the walk Captain Holt spoke to his second cousin of the mysterious man.

"He's been doing better lately, Mamie," he said, with an odd little laugh. "Has anyone sent you word of that?"

They were standing by the dam, waiting while Gerard picked some jointed grasses to carry home; and the latter, happening to raise his eyes just then, was startled at the sudden gorgeous color that mantled in his friend's face. She was looking up at the cap-

tain, and her lips were trembling. After a little she said, clasping her hands tightly together as she spoke:

"It is the turning—I'm *sure* that it is the turning."

The captain laughed oddly again. He was a big, handsome fellow, with brown hair and blue eyes, and wide, square shoulders. He looked just as a soldier ought to look, only Gerard was vaguely distressed by a certain subconscious suspicion that he was not seriously trying to deserve the love that might be coming to *him* some day. He watched him earnestly as he replied to Miss Temple's exclamation.

"You're right, May," he said (and his tone matched his laugh, and jarred on the child-listener's sensibilities) — "you are right. He has come to the new leaf, and it *is* turning. In fact, he's thinking of marriage, for the first time in his life."

Gerard saw the color all sweep out of Miss Temple's face at that; saw her droop dizzily; saw her put out her hand against a tree and lean its way.

"How can he think of marriage?" she said presently, in a funny, choked voice. "He can't live on his pay now: how could he make it do for two?"

Captain Holt took out a cigarette, and, lighting it slowly, replied after a little:

"He can ask his father for a bigger allowance."

Miss Temple was leaning all her weight against

the tree now and breathing quickly; her face stayed white. After a while she said, in a funny, hurried tone:

"His father will never do that." And then she seemed to forget all about Gerard, just hungrily gazing straight upon the man before her. The man looked strangely indifferent to her gaze, and they stood that way for a long time. Then, finally, he took his cigarette from between his lips, and, examining it closely, said:

"There is a girl who can do anything she pleases with his father. If the man will give up cards, straighten out, settle down, and marry, no price is too big to pay for the result. It all lies in that girl's hands."

Something drew Gerard to come over by the tree. Miss Temple's eyes troubled him with a so suddenly poignant trouble that he wondered that they did not also trouble Captain Holt. He looked at him, but the captain was looking elsewhere, in an altogether unconcerned manner. Gerard took his friend's hand into his own, and looked anxiously up in her face. She pressed his hand a very little, but her forehead was wrinkled as if with pain, and she said nothing.

After a while the captain shook the ashes from his cigarette, and said:

"I wonder how the girl will decide!"

As she still said nothing, he waited a while longer,

and then said: "Well?" in a tone of such imperative question that a little, startled thrill ran through her — a thrill that Gerard felt plainly in his hand, tight clasped in her own.

"It is all in that girl's hands," the captain repeated presently. "If she cares anything about seeing him settled, here is her chance."

Then Miss Temple shook from head to foot and her lips parted.

"A woman does n't want to marry a man who cannot support her," she said. And Gerard looked up in fresh wonder at the agony and misery of her tone.

The captain laughed — his same little odd laugh.

"But if the man is working, and doing his best?" he said. And as he spoke he tossed away his cigarette, and, turning, folded his arms, and bent his gaze direct upon her pallor.

She looked at him in a helpless sort of manner, and put her hand up to her head. She seemed to be in pain, so much pain that Gerard slipped his arm about her waist.

"Even a woman who loves has pride," she said in a low tone that was almost like a moan. "I think that she would rather wait until ——"

The captain interrupted her by coming quickly nearer.

"Then" — he said, with almost angry vehemence — "then I tell you the man will go straight back to

his old life and his old habits; and that girl, mind you — that girl will be responsible for it all — for it *all*."

Gerard jumped at the sudden sharp cry which Miss Temple gave then.

"Oh, no," she cried violently, "oh, no — no — no!"

"Yes," said Captain Holt, still standing right in front of her and still looking intently at her. "Yes; she will be responsible. Let her choose."

Then Gerard saw a strange thing, only to be accounted for by the fact that the captain was Miss Temple's second cousin, for the young lady, suddenly loosening the child's embrace about her waist, made a quick step forward, seized the man's hand, and bore it to her lips.

"What are you doing?" the captain exclaimed quite angrily.

"I am praying," said Miss Temple, which was certainly a very curious answer under the circumstances.

It was upon the morning after this scene that Gerard, having heard Captain Holt and Miss Temple arrange for a long drive up the river, sat alone under the big, old, queer, crooked apple tree, thinking long and seriously upon this new aspect of love. He could not but think, and ponder, and wonder, and it all puzzled him sadly, because it was all so far from the ways in which he had been led. One of the most

puzzling phases was that everything had seemed so terrible the afternoon before. Try as he might, he could not believe that any of the sweet, tender charm of which his father had always spoken so reverently could possibly intermingle with Miss Temple's terror and tears over "the man."

Hers was a new aspect of love; and love, seen in her connection, seemed almost something to be feared and dreaded, never to be longed for, not even though she had so far forgiven Captain Holt his part as to kiss his hand.

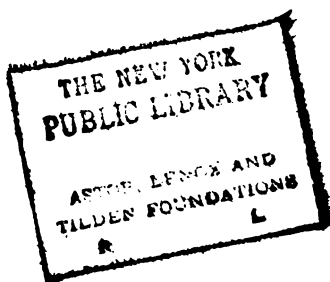
The kissing of the captain's hand was one of the oddest features of the whole in Gerard's eyes. He had not known that a man could or would ever allow a woman to kiss his hand. His father had taught him to kiss his grandmother's hand, but he had never even imagined that the sex of the hand and the lips could under any provocation be reversed.

Well, it was all a great, great mystery!

And the final surprise was that while he sat there under the apple tree the captain drove up to the next house, and Miss Temple, very charming in a white muslin dress and large, black hat, came laughing out of the house and drove away with him. Her gaiety was bewildering, all things considered, and Gerard could not understand it, and wished with all his heart that his father was at home to clarify the murkiness of his mental atmosphere. He reflected more or less upon the subject all day; and



"They spent the whole day in the fields and woods." Page 117



it was only the coming of night and sleep that made him forget it completely.

The next day the captain went away again, and Miss Temple wandered afield alone with Gerard as of old. The day was beautiful, and the little boy thought that his friend had never looked so lovely before; indeed, he really doubted if *anyone* had ever looked so lovely before. When she turned her gaze down upon him and smiled, the smile seemed to overflow his heart with joy, and when she laid her hand upon his shoulder, an oddly subtle magic ran through him.

"Gerard," she said once, "never forget this day, for you are living it with the happiest girl God ever made."

Looking at her, Gerard — young as he was — could not doubt her truth. Except for the lunch-hour, they spent the whole day in the fields and woods. Much of the time she sat quiet, and drew him close beside her.

"Dear little boy," she murmured, "all that your father has taught you in regard to love is true — so true. Try to be worthy of the woman who will love you some day; pray to learn to make her as happy as I have been made."

Gerard felt more bewildered than ever now, since she seemed to be swerving towards his father's standpoint after all. It was plain that the mysterious man had suddenly altered, and that everything about him

was now only a matter for rejoicing. Miss Temple, her eyes uplifted to the blue heavens, rejoiced, and Gerard, his own eyes raised only to the heaven of hers, rejoiced with her. And two days later the double bliss was yet again doubled. There came by the early post a letter to the small boy saying that his father was coming to see him in three days' time; when he carried his good news to his friend he found her also deeply moved by good news of her own.

"Gerard," she said, drawing him towards her with the unspeakable tenderness which had lately seemed more than ever a part of her nature, "do you know what is the most wonderful thing in the wide world? It is to be able to influence people to do what is right. It's the greatest talent that Heaven ever gives. A man is wild and wayward, and you can draw him back to good; his father is angry with him, and you persuade him to forgive him."

She kissed Gerard, and pressed him hard against her bosom, which was rising and falling very quickly. Then he took a book while she wrote a long, long letter; and when it was finished they walked together to the post office to bring the eleven o'clock mail. There were no letters for Miss Temple, and she seemed very much surprised. The city letters always came at noon. However, she said the letter which she was expecting would come the next day.

The week that followed was a curious one for Gerard, because he was in such a hurry to see his

father that his head buzzed all the time, and then, too, Miss Temple acted so queerly. She was always anxious over the post; and no matter how many letters she received, she never seemed satisfied, but was forever looking for one more. Her happiness soon became overlaid with a strange, strained expectancy. She worried and alarmed Gerard; he kept wanting his father worse and worse. His head was dizzy and his hands were cold with wanting him. His foster mother had been summoned to her sick daughter, and Miss Temple had volunteered to look after the little boy. She did have him with her all day, and she came over every evening and read him a story and heard his prayers, but her eyes stayed big and indistinctly fearful; and Gerard could not understand at all, and his head buzzed worse than ever.

The last day that he went out they walked down to the noon post together. He was feeling very bad and shaky, and Miss Temple must have been terribly preoccupied not to notice that a sick child was wavering in his steps beside her. There were several letters and a paper; and as she received them he laid his hand on her arm and said: "I feel so sleepy — let's go home." She looked down quickly into his little, flushed face, and they went straight home at once. Once in the house, she busied herself rapidly and anxiously; not a letter did she open until he had been made comfortable in bed.

"How long have you felt badly, darling?" she

asked then, as she chafed his cold hands. "Oh, Gerard, how blind I have been! My pain took no account of yours."

As she spoke, great tears welled up in her eyes, and he threw off his languor; and tried to comfort her.

"You would n't feel so bad if it was *the* man," he said huskily, for his throat was as hot as his hands were cold. "*The* man will make you happy — *the* man does n't make *the* woman cry."

She smiled and kissed him tenderly, even as her eyes wandered towards her unopened letters; and then he dozed off almost at once, and he was so tired — and so luxuriously well off in bed — that he might have slept for ever and ever so long if it had not been for a terrible scream that woke him with a big start, and made the drops of water come out all over his face. The scream broke into his ears and pierced his heart with its awful and despairing strength, and, struggling up in bed, he tried to gather his wits together and see what had happened, and then he saw; and what he saw was Miss Temple all in a heap by the window, her fingers outspread in her hair, and her eyes looking around the room in a way that was worse than any nightmare.

"Oh, 'God!'" she was screaming, "oh, God, he is going to marry another woman! He used me to reconcile him to his father; and now he is going to marry another woman!"

There was something so dreadful in the strength of her cry and the hopelessness of its echo that it cleared Gerard's brain of everything but his father's teachings. He forgot he was ill, he forgot he was little, he forgot all except that she was a woman in distress, and that love was an ideal and beautiful thing, impossible to soil or destroy.

He stretched out his arms to her.

"Come to me," he cried. "I'll take care of you. It's all right. It's only he is n't *the* man. He can't be *the* man. *The* man would n't make you cry. *The* man would n't want to marry any one else."

He stumbled in his speech and felt uncertain what words to use, and yet so very sure of their truth. Language is complex, but love is simple, so very simple that we often forget its simplicity. Also, it is a rock to cling to in time of need.

She felt that. She stopped screaming, rose, approached the bed, and flung herself upon her knees there, then threw her arms about his little figure, and burst into heartrending sobs.

And he petted and soothed and caressed her, and repeated over and over the phrases which had gone deepest of his father's teachings. And finally she was quiet, and her head lay beside his on the pillow, and he slept while she stared upward, exhausted by the blow which had fallen upon her.

There followed then the strangest period of his whole life. A week of painfully realistic dreams.

Miss Temple took care of him, and the doctor was there all the time. At night she used to cry very softly, but in the daytime she read stories aloud, or sang without ever seeming to get tired. When she sobbed he wanted to repeat to her that it was not worth her while, because it was *not* the man, but his lips were so dry that he could not say one word. This distressed him, because, as the hours passed by and he recollected more and more, he *knew* that it was not the man. The man — the right man — would never make a woman scream, or look for letters that never came. And, confused and blurred as all life appeared to be to him at this juncture, still that was clear and distinct.

One day a very queer thing happened. Miss Temple was in the next room, and the door was partly open, and a strange man was talking to her.

"Mary," said the strange voice, "tell me the truth. Did he deceive you?"

"No," said Miss Temple; "he told me all about it. I thought that you knew, too."

"Oh, no, you did n't," said the voice, which was grave and sad. "You knew who I was willing to do for and who not."

The conversation that followed was strange and blurred, and distressed Gerard, even if it was only a dream. He wanted to reassure whoever the stranger was, and tell him too that it was all a case of mistaken identity — that it was not *the* man.

The same distress attacked him one night when the doctor was laying some directions down. Miss Temple seemed to object. He heard her say: "Ah, no, no! Do not bid me. Indeed, indeed, it is all that keeps my brain from turning. I *must* keep busy; do not empty my hands and life just now."

Gerard could not go on with the dream, and it faded just there; but the next was of his foster mother, who had returned and was begging Miss Temple to take some rest.

"Let me stay," the young lady pleaded. "I shall die if I have nothing to do. Pray, pray let me stay!"

And so she was left sitting at his bedside, caressing his little hand, and he wanted to say more than ever before: "Be comforted, dear — it was not *the* man."

And then his father suddenly began to mingle in the dreams; and the two dear faces were, one or the other, or both together, always about him. Weeks passed over his head unwitting, and time stretched on, and autumn was showering down its leaves before his power of speech returned.

What drama of tragedy, of hope, of self-sacrifice, of bitter doubt, had swept around the big white bed since he first lay down upon it!

The wonder was that he recovered to find all so much as it had been. That is the marvel of inanimate life: two people part forever beside a chair;

and neither can ever forget the words or the chair, but the chair goes unchanged.

On the day when Gerard first came fully back to his reason, the sunlight was dancing gaily with the shadows, and the autumnal red and gold had all fallen to earth, a brilliant brown.

Miss Temple sat by the window, sewing on a bit of white linen, and his father was standing at the foot of the bed looking at him.

"Papa!" he cried feebly.

His father had him in his arms almost that very instant.

"Why, God bless him, the boy's well again!" he said, with his own hearty, joyous laugh.

Miss Temple laid aside her work with a smile.

"Come, too," said Gerard, holding out his hand to her.

She came and sat upon the side of the bed. The small boy looked at her and from her to his father. He had forgotten nothing.

"Papa," he said hurriedly, hastily, "you must teach her what love is, just as you taught me. She does n't know: she's only had the kind that makes her cry. Teach her the other kind, papa — the kind you know."

Miss Temple did not look towards Gerard's father, neither did she blush because he was looking at her. She only looked at Gerard and smiled.

"Never mind about me," she said. "I'm quite

THE MYSTERIOUS MAN 125

happy, dear, over your being well. That is enough joy for us all."

But Gerard was not satisfied. Those better secrets that had been revealed to him must now be hers too. She was looking less pale and sad, he thought; and he was sure that all her sadness might be lifted if she could only learn the real, true science of love.

In the days that followed, when she had gone back next door to — well, not to live, but to sleep, — he confided all the distressing past to his father, and begged him to teach her the better way.

"That man married someone else, you see," he said. "Now he was n't *the* man, or he could n't have done it — could he?"

His father shook his head slowly.

"*The* man would n't do such a thing anyway — would he?" the boy asked.

Again his father shook his head.

"You'll teach her all about it — won't you?" said Gerard. "She thinks she must believe, and then it will come, and that if it don't come it's her fault, because she did n't believe enough. And it is n't her fault, is it, papa?"

"Nothing is her fault," said the father decidedly; "and it *will* come — just because she believes."

"*The* man will come?" asked Gerard joyfully.

"Yes; the right man."

"Oh, papa!"

It was the next day that the little invalid took his

first drive. The autumnal sunshine through the autumnal haze was very fair indeed. Miss Temple went with them. Something like sunshine seemed to be shining behind the haze that had lain so long upon her face. They took a long, long drive; and Gerard slept in his father's arms during all the latter part. When he awakened with a smile they both smiled at him.

And the mist in his friend's eyes seemed reflected in his father's.

When he was strong enough they all went back to town. It was only two months until Christmas; and just before Christmas Miss Temple went away. She had Gerard to tea with her the day before she went, and told him that she would be back to wish him a merry Christmas. He felt sorry to have her go just then, because his father was also absent, and was also to be gone until Christmas Day. However, she looked so sweet and bright that he would not have shown her a clouded face for the world, and smiled all he possibly could as he kissed her good-bye.

They both came back on Christmas morning — on a beautiful bright Christmas morning. And oh, he *was* so glad to see them — each one — both!

And their faces!

They were most suitable Christmas faces, indeed. Even Gerard's was not more unaffectedly beaming. Miss Temple took the little boy close into her arms.

"Gerard," said his father then, "Miss Temple has found the right man."

Gerard lifted his head quickly, and opened his mouth in surprise.

"*The* man?" he asked, wonderingly.

"Yes; *the* man," assented his father.

Miss Temple kissed him again.

"Yes; *the* man," she said also. Her tone was very quiet, very sweet, and very happy.

Gerard understood.

“LE PETIT”

MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS was placidly sipping his coffee that morning; he was absorbed in his letters and thinking also somewhat of a horse that he might perhaps buy. He did not observe any change in the always correct demeanor of his valet. Jean was too good a servant to mix his own affairs with those of his master, or to betray his personal feelings while engaged in serving the latter's breakfast.

Yet “le Petit” (meaning “the very little boy”) had been born that morning, and Jean was his father. As Jean and his wife had been married fifteen years and never had any children before, the coming of “le Petit” might have justified a small amount of coffee-spilling and excused it, too — and yet there was none.

Monsieur le Marquis never knew that such a person as “le Petit” existed until a year later. He learned it then through a sad medium, the death of Marie, wife of Jean and mother of the baby. Someone else had to put on the boots of Monsieur le Marquis one morning and take them off one night; then Jean was back, very sober, but as correct as ever.

"Did she leave any children, Jean?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Marquis."

"How many?"

"Only one, monsieur."

"How old is it?"

"'Le Petit' has barely a year, monsieur."

"Where have you placed him?"

"He is at nurse, monsieur — just by Beaugency."

That was all.

But a cruel Fate pursued the fortunes of "le Petit," and the year after he lost his mother his father also was taken from him.

Monsieur le Marquis was so kind and gracious as to go to the bedside of the dying man.

"Did you say you had any children, Jean?"

"Oui, monsieur." Jean could hardly articulate.

"How many?"

"Only one, monsieur."

"Is it a boy or a girl?"

"A boy, monsieur."

"Do any of the people know where he is?"

"Oh, oui, monsieur. Alphonse knows."

"Do not distress yourself, Jean. I shall see that the child is provided for."

"Que le bon Dieu vous bénisse, monsieur."

The day after Jean's simple funeral the Marquis sent for Alphonse, and spoke of his new charge.

"And 'le Petit,' Alphonse, where is he?"

"At Beaugency, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Is he in good hands?"

You may not shrug your shoulders when you are a footman and your questioner is a marquis, so Alphonse merely looked dubious.

"Let the woman know that I will be responsible for the child's bill," said the Marquis, who was looking at his watch fob and not at his servant.

And that was all.

Two years passed.

It was the day before Christmas. Monsieur le Marquis was sitting in his large and lofty library, cutting the leaves of some new brochures. Then the mail came in — a heterogeneous mail — newspapers, pink notes, and just ordinary letters. One much more than ordinary, absolutely vulgar; badly written and sealed with a dirty finger; a begging letter, evidently. The Marquis, whose heart was a good heart, but long preserved in cold storage, opened the letter preparatory to throwing it to the blazing logs at his right, and then stayed his hand, astonished at its shortness.

MONSIEUR:

The child dies shortly.

Very humbly, your servant,
MARGUERITE LAZARE.

Monsieur le Marquis forgot to throw the letter to the flames. He held it in his hands and threw a long look into the fire in its place. Above the

shelf was a great mirror, on the shelf was a miniature — the miniature of a pretty young woman.

That woman had come to die on a Christmas Eve, and with her had done "le Petit," who should have some day been Marquis.

Monsieur le Marquis rose up suddenly and thrust the letter in his pocket. He rang violently.

"George," he said to the servant who came, "I leave by the first train for Beaugency. Find out when it goes. Order a carriage. Pack my box. Hasten!"

Alone in a carriage of the Orléans express Monsieur le Marquis sat and meditated while he smoked. Beaugency is very close to Paris though, and his journey was soon over. When they quitted the *sortie*, George went to a hotel with the luggage, and his master turned into the main street.

What so bright and gay as the main street of a French town on Christmas Eve? — windows bright and gay — faces bright and gay — the very air sparkling with joy.

Monsieur le Marquis went into the biggest of the shops and pushed his way through the throng until he stood among the toys. And then he bought and bought and bought, until the black-bloused clerk figured to himself that here was certainly the uncle of a very numerous row of nephews and nieces.

"Now let them all be put together as quickly as

possible," said the Marquis, "and send them at once by a special order to the house of Marguerite Lazare, on the Romorantin road."

And he went to the *caisse* and paid.

The next day was Christmas. Never before had Monsieur le Marquis been so lodged on the holiday morning. But the skill of George bridged over many of the most glaring differences between Beaugency and Paris, and at ten o'clock the valet called a cab and saw his master drive away southward.

Out on the road to Romorantin stood the wee farm of the wife Lazare — a farm not quite two acres in extent, but every inch was made to count, and so the small stone house was not allowed to use up more than nine square yards of the precious soil. It was a market-garden, and the produce went to Paris every day on a train whose passing was so early that Marguerite Lazare had not slept late for ten years. She had been married ten years and one day that Christmas morning.

The small place was neat — very neat; and if it had been the personal estate of the family Lazare they had been rich indeed. But the ground was rented ground, and the rent was a huge and hungry earthworm that kept out of sight and never ceased its depredations. Marguerite and her husband had laid many thoughtful plans for the destruction of this worm, but there must be food for other mouths,

and while those mouths ate the worm's was never idle. The other mouths were for the most part little mouths, and because the worm took much they got little, and so went one after another to the small cemetery across the fields. On this Christmas morning there was but one left, a baby of a very few months. Monsieur le Marquis heard her wailing as he quitted his cab, and Marguerite had taken her up to hush just as his tap sounded at the door.

He was expected, and her face was full of joy when she saw him.

"Monsieur!" she cried, "the child is saved!"

The Marquis entered the small — so small! — place, and saw.

In the middle of the earthen floor sat "le Petit," his tiny, thin face illumined to a degree that words may not describe. He was surrounded by the toys, and they spread beyond him to the limits of the bed, and the oven, and the table, and the chest. Animals that he had taken out of their ark; soldiers that he had not had time to take out of their box; Pierrot and Pierrette to be worked by strings; a file of trick monkeys to be worked by a crank; books with pictures; books with plates to cut out; a drum; a sword; a trumpet —

And, be it said, this child had never had a toy before!

"He is saved!" said Marguerite, "he has laughed! We have never heard him laugh till this hour."

Monsieur le Marquis looked at "le Petit" in his poor little patched blouse, with thin little bare legs pressing the earthen floor, and his heart was strangely stirred. He watched the child raise the toys one after another and press them against his heart in touching speechless rapture, and when the small face was lifted toward his own he knew that that small face was to have a chance to become less pale and to have that chance at once.

"Has he been ill?" he asked.

"Oh, no, Monsieur le Marquis, never ill. Only Monsieur can figure to himself that there is so much work, and now there is the still littler one, and with her has come yet again more work, and 'le Petit' has been much alone — too much alone."

The Marquis, looking always at the wan little figure seated amid the wealth of toys, could well believe it.

"I return to Paris this afternoon," he said, "and I will take the child with me. Let him be properly clothed and brought to the hotel before two o'clock. My valet will take charge of him there."

"Oui, Monsieur le Marquis," the woman courtesied, "and Monsieur can believe that I shall rejoice if I may ever know of his becoming well. It was not neglect, Monsieur must understand. It was the poverty. There should have been meat broth every day, and there could be no meat at all."

The Marquis was always watching the little one

on the floor, but now he turned his eyes upon the baby that was being hushed.

"Is it your only child?" he asked.

"Oui, Monsieur, the last of seven."

Monsieur le Marquis reflected.

"I shall continue to pay the money monthly," he said slowly. "You will perhaps put by a portion of it for the little one."

The woman choked.

"*Que le bon Dieu vous bénisse, Monsieur le Marquis,*" she stammered, quite overcome.

It was fifteen years later. Monsieur le Marquis was fifteen years older. His hair was quite white, and his eyes and his glance were each less keen than they had been in years gone by.

It was the day of the opening of the races at Chantilly. Monsieur le Marquis was going out with a party to stay at a hard-by château and revel in his favorite sport.

But first he sent for "le Petit." He always called him "le Petit," even now, when he out-measured his patron by the whole of his fine boyish head.

"'Le Petit,' you have never had a vacation in all these years, n'est-ce pas?"

"Le Petit" just smiled.

"I have never desired one, Monsieur. Monsieur le Marquis knows that I have been well content."

"Eh bien! so much the better! But you are to

have one now. I leave for Chantilly to be gone several days. There on the table lie one hundred francs. Go down to Beaugency — smell the air of the country — hunt up your foster mother.”

The eyes of “le Petit” laughed with pleasure.

“Monsieur is too good to me,” he said.

The Marquis smiled.

“There, there!” he said; “go, go!”

He held out his hand and the young man took it and pressed his lips upon it.

Still two years more passed by.

Monsieur le Marquis was becoming feeble. He had to use a cane, more or less — or the arm of “le Petit” — when he walked in his park of a morning. It was the arm oftenest, and it was not only on the arm of “le Petit” that he was learning to lean. The leaning went further each month.

“You shall be superintendent here when Godain dies,” he said, thoughtfully, one morning.

“Le Petit” looked thoughtful, too.

“Godain is not old,” he said, “and he is too good and too honest to ever leave while he lives.” “Le Petit” hesitated. “It will be years then before I can marry,” he added.

The Marquis halted and stared.

“Marry!” he cried, “you! Do you wish to marry?”

“Le Petit” smiled and made no other answer.

“But who is there here for you to marry?”

"No one here, Monsieur le Marquis, but at Beaugency —" he paused.

"Ah!" said the Marquis, "and who is there in Beaugency?"

"There is Margot, Monsieur — the daughter Lazare!"

The Marquis continued to stand and to stare.

"But they are so poor, 'le Petit,' and you have had so many advantages. You can look for a good dot."

"She has a dot."

"The daughter Lazare?"

"Oui, Monsieur le Marquis. Poor as they are, they have put by for her dot a certain sum that they have never failed to receive monthly for seventeen years."

The Marquis made a little movement.

"It has counted up, Monsieur — she has a good dot."

They walked on down the winding path that led to the little trout-pond. The Marquis was thinking.

"There is that stone cottage at the entrance of the avenue," he said at last; "it will shortly be empty. If that was yours could you marry Margot and be content to wait there together for the superintendency?"

"Oh, Monsieur!"

"You think you could do it?"

"Oh, Monsieur!"

It was the morning of the twentieth anniversary

of one certain Christmas Day. Monsieur le Marquis sat quietly by his fireside. He felt a little lonely, and his souvenirs were rather heavy.

Then the door opened gently and a young man looked in.

"Monsieur le Marquis permits?" he asked.

"But, 'le Petit,' certainly, certainly!"

Then the young man opened the door and gave passage to a pretty, rosy-faced girl, who bore in her arms one of those neat, hard little packages on which all French womankind look so tenderly, and pace the sunny boulevards so patiently with. She courtesied before Monsieur le Marquis, and then knelt at his knee, and put aside the veil that covered the small, carefully pinned up bundle. The young man laid his hand upon his patron's shoulder, not in any wise familiarly, but rather in an outburst of deepest feelings.

"Monsieur le Marquis," he said, and his voice quite trembled, "it is 'le Petit'; he goes abroad to-day for the first time!"

The Marquis — almost at the end of the road — looked at the small traveler who was just setting out.

"May all go well with him," he said gently. Margot smiled down upon the baby, and then up at the old gentleman. Her eyes were full of tenderness untold.

"*Que le bon Dieu vous bénisse, Monsieur le Marquis!*" she said gratefully and reverently.

THE CAPTAIN'S CHARM

HE was a captain with a charm. A charm of look, and a charm of way, and still another charm.

He saw her come on board. She was a wee, wee thing in a blue cap with a gold band quite like his own, and a blue jacket displaying the flag that was his own embroidered on one sleeve. From under the cap there floated forth a lot of yellow curls — such yellow curls as the captain, who was dark of eyes and hair, had always cared for most; and beneath the inch and a half of frilly white dress that showed below the blue jacket the captain saw two small legs and two little trotty feet all in white socks and patent-leather sandals. It was not often that anything so altogether after his own heart crossed the gang-plank, and from his secret coign of advantage he looked smiling down, rejoicing, that he knew himself possessed of that charm which might be depended upon to win the heart beneath the small blue jacket.

She who came with the baby was all in black and shrouded in a crape veil. The captain knew that she would sit upon his right, because she was one

of those who always have that place. He was not vividly interested in her, because the people who have a right to the captain's right are hardly ever the ones whom the owner of the right would choose to have there; but he was used to that and caviled not.

An hour or so later the bugle sounded, the band struck up, the anchor came on deck, and the ship set forth to sea.

Then for three days the captain, walking up and down or looking forth from his secret coign of advantage, watched much, but never saw the golden curls nor the wee trotty feet again. No one came to occupy the place upon his right at table either. He asked why not after a while, and the doctor told him that both were ill; not so very ill, but too ill to leave their room.

It was the next morning that the sun came out, and the sea monsters who had been humping their backs beneath the keel and spouting whole waves over the decks folded all their paraphernalia of misery and went below — seven miles below — themselves. The sea lost no time in adjusting her naturally kindly disposition to these circumstances, and by noon the whole wide expanse was one smile of sweet sun and air.

Thereupon the captain, walking about the deck for a bit, saw two stewards, each bearing an armful of rugs, come out of the companionway, and go to

a certain chair which had been snugly disposed before the window which was his own, and under the stair which ran upwards beside it. The stewards began to arrange the chair, and in a minute it developed that the load which one carried was not entirely rugs, but consisted in part of a very little white girl. They put her down in the middle of the rugs and tucked her up very carefully indeed, and then they went away and left her there, and she stayed quiet, only her wee pale face peeping out above the infinity of wrappings, and with her blue eyes fixed in a sort of innocent awe on the sunshiny ocean beyond.

The captain, who had been talking to a little group of passengers, kept looking again and again at the tiny face, and one of the ladies noticed his interest and spoke of the child.

"We've all been asked not to go near her," she said. "It seems the little thing is fearfully shy, and her mother assured her that if she would allow herself to be brought up on deck she was so little that no one would notice that she was there."

The captain smiled at this. "She would speak to me," he declared confidently. "The kiddies always do." And thereupon he left the group and — just to prove his power — walked towards the chair.

Something held him back from speaking to her at once — something in her littleness and his bigness,

something in her white weakness and his sea-tanned strength. But he walked to the rail nearby and stood for a minute looking off over the waves, and then turned and smiled upon her. Her eyes grew wide and startled and her cheeks flushed, but for a minute she did not move. Then the captain saw in horror two big tears form and roll down the little face, and out from among the rugs came a wee hand and quietly wiped the two big eyes. And then, when he started impulsively forward, saying quickly something — he did n't just know what — the rugs all rose in quick insurrection, the little hand that had dashed away the tears burst bondage, two socked and sandaled feet flew out into the air, and before the big man could finish his phrase a small frightened form was running unsteadily towards the companionway, crying out wildly.

"My mamma, my mamma!" she sobbed to a white-jacketed man who was standing just within, and the white-jacketed man, who had seen nothing of what had just occurred, picked her up in his arms and carried her below to her mother.

The captain did not turn his head to look after her. He went straight into his own room and shut the door. He felt terribly. No thing had ever fled in terror from him before. No child had ever feared him. He sat heavily down and bit his lip. His eyes burnt. He felt wretchedly that now they would not be able to get her up on deck again.

His breath came long and hard. As I said before, he felt terribly.

As he sat there thinking of the two big tears upon the pink fright of the small, quivering face he knew that he would have two tears of his very own if his bigness should not prove itself sufficiently clever to think of a way to adjust matters with her littleness very soon. And just at that second a way opened — a way so simple that he wondered at his own stupidity in having ever been downcast at all; the way that he had thought about with a smile when he had seen her first come fluttering over the gang-plank — his gang-plank. It is a great thing to own a charm — a veritable charm — and I said in the beginning that the captain owned charms. He sent for the doctor — the ship's doctor.

"You were n't on deck to see me frighten that baby to death just now, were you?" he asked.

"No," said the doctor, smiling; "but I was with her mother when the baby was brought back."

"It was too bad," said the captain, looking down. "I never saw a child so shy. I did n't mean to worry her."

"Oh, her mother has made her that way," said the doctor, easily. "Her mother has had a lot of trouble, I take it, and she has spoiled the baby. There was a nurse that always had the care, and the nurse was taken ill and had to stay behind. I can't see why they did n't stay behind, too. The

mother can't take care of the kiddie herself. She's too weak."

"Is she ill?"

"No, she's been ill, but she's just weak now. She lies still, and the little one sits cuddled up by her and plays paper dolls."

"I wonder," said the captain very slowly, "if I might go down there and make my peace. What do you think?"

The doctor looked about him and saw the charm — the most potent of the captain's arsenal. "You count upon that?" he said, smiling.

"Yes," said the captain, returning the smile.

"I will ask, if you like."

"When?"

"Now."

"Very good."

It was about an hour later that the captain, with his charm in his pocket, went to the stateroom where the baby and her mother stayed. It was quite as the doctor had said. The two were together on the divan, and the captain saw to his astonishment that the mother was only the baby in larger edition. She was white and gold, too, only the sponge which had wiped nearly everything that counts in life off of her slate had also taken the pink from her face and had put dark shadows around the blue of her big eyes.

The captain was clever now, he had learned his lesson; he did not notice the little one, who shrank

within the circle of her mother's arm while she hastily gathered her paper dolls into safety with trembling fingers; but he talked to her mother in a friendly way that showed that he really did not eat people up alive — not at once, at any rate.

Suddenly the paper dolls ceased to seek shelter, the little tot became immobile, her eyes grew absolutely black — almost as black as the captain's own. The captain looked at her, but she did not see him. Her mother looked at her, but she did not see her. All in the world that she could see just then was the captain's charm, which was returning her big-eyed wonder with a little bright-eyed wonder of its own. For the captain's charm was peeping forth from the captain's pocket.

"Would you like to see my little chicken?" the captain said, very, very gently.

Then he put his hand in his pocket and took it out.

It was a little yellow ball with a tiny beak and two shiny beads of eyes.

The baby clasped her hands tightly on her bosom; her mother could feel the throb of emotion in the little form pressed against her.

"Give me your hand," the captain said, still very, very gently; and he took her hand within his own and laid it on the soft down and held it there.

"Don't — the — birdie — mind?" she panted in a whisper.

"No," said the captain; "the birdie knows that

I would n't hurt it. It's a brave birdie. It would go anywhere with me."

The child lifted her eyes to his. "It's a brave birdie," she repeated faintly.

"I have two more in my room," said the captain. "I'm taking them home with me. This is the last time that I shall cross the big sea. After this I'm going to live in the country, and have no end of little chickens and little lambs and all sorts of little things. Is n't that nice?"

"She is not old enough to know how nice that is," said the baby's mother with a sigh.

"Will you come with me to my room some day and see the other little chickens?" the captain asked. He felt suddenly timid as he spoke the words — as if his reputation were at stake.

She looked at him, and he felt his fate hanging in the balance. It hung there for a long minute, but when the minute was over she said, "Yes."

"And will you let me carry you to your chair soon again?" asked the captain, become of a sudden tremendously courageous. "You know no one will dare trouble you if I take you there. I will fold your rugs nicely about you, and you will soon be just as comfortable as if you were my little chicken in my pocket."

She looked at him again then, and again he felt terribly anxious. And then again she considered and finally said, "Yes."

He took her up in his arms at that and kissed her. She was a charming little child and unlocked his heart completely, so that he kissed her again.

"I'm *awfully* fond of them," he said in a sort of apology to her mother.

And then — with a shock of fresh misery — he saw the blood rush into the mother's face and the tears storm into *her* eyes, and, turning from him, she said in a tone that was almost a cry, "Oh, I know — I know — and I hope you have many — many; but I have only that one — that one — and I'm so frail and she's so frail — and we're all alone."

The captain, thrown into blind agony of desperation, looked at her, and then, not at all knowing what he was doing, bolted out of the room abruptly, and, because he had the baby in his arms, it followed that he carried her with him.

As she had neither wraps nor rugs, he could not take her to her chair, so when he perceived what he had done he carried her to his own room, biting his lips a great deal as he did so.

He put her down in the corner of the big sofa, and made himself very busy getting the little chicken established. His heart was all torn and tossed as he did so, and he felt himself to have been as innocently big and brutal for a second time as he had been before. He had never had any passengers like these two. Not that he shared the doctor's view as to the advisability of their not having come.

"You see, this is the little chicken's mother," he said, talking against time to her while he wondered acutely if her mother had stopped crying yet or not. "I made them a mother. All little tots have to have a mother, you know. I cut the wool in little strips and hung them close in the box, and they think it's their very own mother's feathers. Look!"

She was looking all the time, her face pink with excitement. The chickens were running here and there, and peeping softly. The captain brought out a piece of bread and crumbed it in milk and fed them. It interested him very much, but his wondering faculties still wondered. Suppose she was still crying — that other mother there below.

"Do the birdies have a nap?" the little one asked, when the feeding was over.

"Many," he said with a smile. "And you?"

"I have mine now," she said. "Please take me back to my nap and my mamma."

She held her arms out to him. Outstretched arms are always dear, but the outstretched arms of a little child are the dearest of all. The captain — the big, dark captain — gathered her close and carried her away. Her head — already heavy with sleep — lay pressed against his shoulder, her yellow curls nestled against his throat. There was a fullness in his throat because he was so cruel, so unworthy, so altogether abominable in his own eyes. He felt, as he went steadily down the unsteady stair and held the little

form so tenderly in his strong arms, what a painful thing it was to be the kind of man that he was — the kind of man that had grown so conceited over the reputation of being a generally all around good fellow that he had absolutely touched bottom of his own baseness in an experience like this. Frightened a baby and set a woman crying, and all inside of twenty-four hours!

As he came along the corridor the stewardess effaced herself against the wall to let him pass.

"She sleeps," she whispered.

And he looked down and saw that it was so.

The stewardess followed him closely.

"Madame is asleep," she told him. "Can I take the little one?"

"See if I can lay her down," he said.

The stewardess slipped by him and ran ahead. She turned at the door and smiled.

The curtain was drawn across the window, and in its reddened shadow the baby's mother slept, her hand under her face, her own yellow curls bound in a wavy knot behind her head. The captain stepped into the room. The stewardess had flattened a pillow ready; he laid the little one down, and she spread a blanket over the small form.

The captain turned quickly and walked swiftly away. He went up on the bridge, established himself in his accustomed corner, and looked with steady eyes out over the wide waves.

It was nearly noon, and every wave had a white crest that broke into golden curls or else wove its foam in one great overflowing knot. Above, there was a sky as blue as the bluest eyes into which he had ever looked.

He had never seen the ocean look so fair before. For the nonce life's great mirror had no shadows — nothing — nothing — nothing but blue and gold.

THE OLD WITCH AND THE BLACK CATS

THIS is an absolutely true story of an old witch in the days of old witches, and of two black cats of the same day.

Well!

The old witch came in from an afternoon tea where she had had a very pleasant time indeed. She had not taken her black cat to the tea with her, because he was a quarrelsome black cat, and it is perfectly impossible to take a quarrelsome black cat with you to a tea and really enjoy your stay.

So the witch had left him at home, and now as she came in she looked about to see if he had been cross about being left and revenged himself by turning into a mouse so as to frighten her, or whether he had been pleasant about it and was to be found skimming the cream for their evening porridge. The black cat was very fond of cream and liked to skim it so that he could lick the skimmer afterwards.

He was nowhere to be seen, so the witch hung her red cloak on the peg behind the door, leaned her broomstick up in the corner, put her long, pointed

hat carefully away in her long, pointed hatbox, and replaced the magic spells that she usually took with her in her pocket when she left home, between the leaves of her spelling book.

Then she went into her bedroom, and there she received a sad shock, for pinned to her pincushion she found a note from the black cat, and as she had never known that he could write it certainly did surprise her to see his writing.

"DEAR WITCH," — said the note — "I am very sorry to leave you like this but soon after you went away a mosquito that I was about to slap on my nose as I slept by the fire turned into a wizard and invited me to visit the moon with him. I could not resist the temptation and we just caught the last sunbeam going that way.

"I left the skimmer in its usual place and the cream I took with me. Whenever you dream of being out in the rain of pitchforks you will know that I am thinking of you.

"With scratches and yowls, as ever yours,
"B. C."

Perhaps you can imagine the absolute disgust of the old witch when she read that letter. For a minute she was so angry that little jets of lightning jumped from her in all directions, and there was a sort of low distant rumbling in her ears. But she soon saw that there was no help for her till morning, so she washed the skimmer, locked up the house, shook her broom-

stick at the moon, and went to bed. She dreamed of a rain of pitchforks the very first thing, but she jumped up, grabbed the nearest fork, and ran it through the black cat's basket; and with a sharp noise like water dropping on a hot stove the rain ceased, and she dreamed no more.

The next morning right after breakfast she set out for the Cattelligence Coffice, which was the magical name of the place where witches got hold of their black cats.

The Cattelligence Coffice was kept by a very fine old witch who had been one of the most remarkable of her kind, until one dark night when she was riding from Saturn to Jupiter on her broomstick the broomstick had broken in two and let the old witch sit down so very hard and suddenly upon the earth, that she could never be persuaded to get upon another broomstick, or go upon another ride. Her own black cat, who had been sitting upon the broom end of the broom, had been so overcome with amusement at seeing her going round and round like a pinwheel all the way down, that she had never felt like forgiving him or having another cat, and so, as under these circumstances she could n't possibly be a witch any more, and as even witches must live somehow, she had hit upon the idea of opening a Cattelligence Coffice. All witches seeking black cats or all black cats seeking witches always flew there first of all, and such a whirring of petticoats and slamming

down of broomsticks was never heard anywhere else, except on Hallowe'en.

Our witch arrived pretty promptly and asked the other witch if she had any black cats on hand.

"Why, whatever has become of your own?" asked the other old witch, who was a terrible gossip; "he has n't turned into something that you can't bear, has he?"

"No," said our old witch, "he went off while I was at the tea yesterday; just up and left without even washing the skimmer."

"Dear me, now, without even washing the skimmer, think of that, will you!" said the other old witch. "Well, there's no use denying black cats are getting very scarce, and they know it and that makes them airy."

"Oh, he's gone to the moon," said our old witch.

"There now, think of that!" said the other old witch sympathetically.

Then she opened the door and let our old witch walk into the inside room where six or seven witches were discussing matters with several black cats. Some of the cats were turning into things to prove their power, and there was considerable confusion in the room as a consequence, because when five black cats all turn into elephants at once and that in a very small room, it *does* shake things up a bit.

"This is the one for you," said the other old witch to our old witch, leading her up to a smallish black

cat who was making cabalistic symbols on the wall with his tail.

"How long has he been black-catting?" asked our witch.

"Ages," said the black cat, and as he said it he made a sign which, since the days of the Lemurians has required everyone who knows what it means to instantly stand on his or her head when he or she sees it made. So the turmoil in the room became simply awful.

"Can you ride a broomstick?" asked our witch, when she was right side up again.

The black cat waved assent with his right paw.

"Can you turn into things?" asked the witch.

"Point your thumb at me," said the black cat, "and I become a serpent; your first finger, a fish; your second finger, a fowl; your third finger, a beast; your little finger, and I blow up with everything in the vicinity."

"Good gracious," said the witch, "I must put my ring on my little finger to remember not to point it at you."

So she put her ring upon her little finger, paid the keeper of the Cattelligence Coffice the regular fee, took the black cat, and departed.

As soon as they reached home the black cat turned into a moth and hid in the curtain until the witch had luncheon cooked and ready, which the witch thought very rude in him.

"You must n't do that again," she said as they sat down to the table.

"Must n't I?" said the black cat turning into a tiger and looking at her very hard. "Why must n't I?"

"Oh, well, if it amuses you," said the witch, feeling very uncomfortable. And then to her great dismay he stayed a tiger until he had swallowed the whole of the lunch — every last bit of it.

Just as soon as it was all gone he turned into a fly and stuck to the ceiling until she had the dishes all washed, when he resumed his own form and took a nap in his basket.

"I don't believe that I can get along with him at all," thought the witch, and she planned to go on her broomstick and interview the lady of the Cattelligence Coffice again at midnight; but as soon as the cat awoke he turned into a boa-constrictor, swallowed the broomstick, and went back to sleep again.

"Dear me," said the witch, "did anybody ever?" and she spent a very stupid evening alone with the sleeping boa-constrictor.

The broomstick gave bad dreams, and got itself all chewed to bits in the night.

"Now see what you've done!" cried the witch in a rage the next morning, rushing at the black cat.

"Look out, look out!" shrieked the cat.

Alas, too late! She had forgotten her ring in her excitement and pointed all her fingers at him.

With a noise like thousands of sky-rockets all going off at once the cat blew up, the house blew up, and nothing was ever seen of that particular old witch again.

Or of that black cat!

As I said in the beginning, this is an absolutely true story of a witch in the days of witches and of two black cats of the same day.

HIMSELF REBORN

COURTNAY sat by the window, smoking. He sat low down and far back in a sleepy-hollow chair, and had one foot laid very squarely across the other knee in a sort of idle, musing pose. His face — which was the face of a good looking, thoughtless young fellow of close on thirty — bore pretty much the same expression as his body. He looked as if he were thinking just about as seriously as he could without taking the least bother to do so.

What he was thinking of was a horse — a horse that had just been offered him for five thousand dollars. Five thousand dollars may or may not be regarded as a pretty high price for a horse not intended for racing, but in the case of this particular horse five thousand dollars represented such a considerable diminution of the original price that Courtney felt called upon to look really uncommonly serious. He liked to drive exceptionally good horses; he already owned one that was nothing less than a topper. This one matched that one, and, after all, what better use could he possibly make of the money?

He dropped the end of his cigarette and rose and

went to his desk. Over the desk hung a calendar. His eye fell upon it as he seated himself. The 28th of June! Great Scott! Why, he was twenty-nine years old to-day, and he had never thought a thing about it! Twenty-nine! That meant thirty next year. Getting on; yes, most certainly getting on. He sat still for a minute, and his eyes moved involuntarily from the calendar to two photographs, one large and one small, which stood near by. The small one was a sweet little miniature-like presentment of a girl of fifteen or sixteen, with laughing lips and eyes; the large one was of the same girl some seven or eight years after, a good deal altered. In the larger picture the eyes no longer laughed, but regarded him so earnestly as to be almost sad — or was it reproachful? — in their gaze. Courtney, who hated anything sad — or reproachful — suddenly abandoned his purpose of writing an authoritative word as to the horse, and quitted the desk. He did not return to the chair, however, but moved about and wished impatiently that — well, he really did n't know what he did wish, and was soon forced to admit the fact.

But anyhow, there was nothing better to do than to go out on horseback and thus assimilate the new dignity which age had just thrown upon him, and if Nellie used to be gayer than she had seemed to be lately, why — he could think about it while he was out riding.

"Owens," he called, "tell them to put the saddle on Laura, and you get out my things — will you?"

"Yes, sir," said a valet, instantly appearing in the doorway. And then disappeared just as quickly.

An hour later Courtnay rode out on Laura, both being equally happy over the ride and its concomitants. Laura rejoiced in a good heart and a clear conscience, and if Courtnay was a bit grave at first over this new year of age, and that possibly reproachful look in the eyes of the picture by his desk, he soon felt the bracing effects of the fresh morning air completely overpower the bad effects of age and a wide-eyed look of bravely smothered pain.

He had never done anything to prevent Nellie from marrying anyone she wanted to; he had been awfully good to her always, and given her anything that she fancied, and taken her about like a — a brother, ever since that first day she had come laughing and fluttering home from boarding school. What a pretty little thing she had been! Well, no one could deny that she was really better looking now. Only for her eyes — George! but that was an awful mean look in her eyes — as if something she had to keep still about was hurting her. He had never realized how very plainly it showed before. Heigho! Come, Laura, let's have a gallop!

The road led down through the woods, and then into Wild-cat Gully. It seemed stonier and rougher than usual, and Laura shook her head over it. There

was a byroad leading up along the hillside which she eyed with much greater favor, and Courtnay, always ready to oblige when the effort cost him nothing, allowed her to turn her steps in between the double row of stump fences and blackberry bushes.

The road climbed and climbed, and began to become rough and stony itself. It ran along a very barren stretch of hillside, and then turned in among some ragged and broken old fruit trees. Courtnay could not remember ever having come that way before, although he had supposed that he knew every way in the country. It grew continually worse and more uneven; rains had grooved it out, and heavier rains had ditched it deeper on one side than another.

Courtnay could not see how any wagon might ever traverse it in safety, yet there were faint marks of wagon tracks laid down within a day or two. A fine time the occupants must have had! Laura slipped on a stone just there, and her rider looked carefully forward to see what would be the possible end of them both. He saw then that the end was near at hand. The end was a pair of bars (there had once been four, but two were broken), and beside the bars was a stile. On top of the stile were seated two children, a particularly small, wizened, serious-faced boy, and a particularly large, fat, and serious-faced baby. The boy had his arm around the baby, and his thin, claw-like hand showed outspread against the stretch of blue that covered its forward plump-

ness. His seriousness was bright-eyed with interest, and a queer little appealing smile was on his lips. At first Courtney only noticed the bright eyes and the smile, but the next second his eyes fell on the small bare limbs below, and he saw with a curious jump in his heart that the boy was nearly crippled, his legs being pitifully misshapen.

The baby, sitting cuddled close in the protecting circle of the thin arm, was brown-eyed and frankly dimpled. It had its thumb in its mouth, and viewed Laura with deep and sincere astonishment. As the bars made an effectual barrier to further progress Courtney stopped, and then — without very clearly knowing why he did so — approached the little ones as near as Laura could come to them.

"It looks as if my ride must end here," he said with a smile; "this is a private road, I take it?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy; "it was shut up for ever so long, and then father opened it. It is n't a very good road, sir, is it?"

"Oh, it is n't bad for a saddle-horse," Courtney responded cheerfully, "but I don't see how anyone uses it with a wagon. Is that your sister?" he added, struck somehow by the evident keen joy taken in his sight and speech. "She's very pretty."

The boy's face glowed; he looked down upon the baby.

"It's a boy. And, please, sir, look at his legs. They're just as straight as anyone's can be." There

was something in the tone in which the words were spoken and in the accompanying action, a motion which drew up Billy's soiled frock and revealed two fat little brown legs as round and perfect as ever were created, which almost choked Courtnay on the spot — other legs present being what they were.

"It's because I've never let him walk," said the boy, still looking fondly down upon the pair of dimpled brownnesses. "That's the trouble so often, sir; they let them walk too young. I know how it is, and I have been very careful of Billy. He's only beginning to stand by chairs. He wants to walk — he's awful strong — but I won't let him. I carry him."

Courtney's eyes went from the baby's rosininess to the little speaker's pale earnestness and back again. He did not lower his look to the withered and bent limbs that hung over the rough rail of the stile; he did n't do it because he could n't do it — he was n't able to.

"How old is Billy?" he asked.

"He's very near one year and five months, sir. Don't you think he looks well? I do think children ought to be well and strong. It's so hard if you are n't strong. I just made up my mind to have Billy strong. You can't do hardly anything if you are n't strong. And I want Billy to be able to do *everything*."

Courtney felt the big eyes turned to his face, but

he did not meet their gaze; he continued to contemplate Billy.

"He looks awfully well," he commented.

The boy turned his eyes back upon the baby.

"He is awfully well; he's never been sick a day. I think it's the fresh air, and then I give him a great deal of milk. I remember my mother said once that a baby could hardly drink too much milk, and so I give him a great deal."

"Is n't — is n't your mother living?" the young man asked.

"No, sir; we've had a great deal of trouble, and when Billy came mother died, and that was the last and worst trouble of all."

Courtney got down from his horse; he had no particular object in getting down, but Laura thought that he had, and her soft velvet nose came sugar-begging at once. He put his hand in his pocket and took out her three bits for her, and then, looking up, he saw in the children's eyes that Laura was to be given a chance to be unselfish.

"Shall we divide even?" he asked with a smile.

"Oh, sir," said the boy, then, "Billy's too little to say 'Thank you.'" He fairly beamed as Courtney held out the two lumps. "He never had any white sugar before, sir. But we have brown sugar." Then he added: "Oh, I *do* wish he could thank you."

Courtney stood still while the three lumps of sugar



"Courtney stood still while the three lumps of sugar were being eaten."

Page 164

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R

L

were being eaten. Then, after Laura had wiped some tickling particles off on her knee, he slipped her bridle over a nearby tree branch, and, coming back to the stile, sat down on its second step, and stretching his handsome riding boots out before him looked downward, not upward.

"I suppose your father is a farmer?" he said presently.

"Yes, sir, he is. He says he ought not to be, because he has so much trouble, but he is."

"What sort of trouble has he had?"

"Oh, sir, every sort. Very poor crops, and then he tried to raise chickens, and they all died, and he had to mortgage the farm, and then just look at me — I'm old enough to begin to help if I only was n't like I am."

Courtney laid his crop neatly along the side of his leg.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"I'm almost twelve, sir. I ought to be most like a man, and all I can do is to take care of Billy."

There was a perfectly dumbfounding absence of any hint of complaint in the tone — only a straightforward statement, shadowed by sympathy for the father who might have naturally expected something which he had not got.

Courtney said nothing.

"But, sir, I've made up my mind to one thing."

"Yes. What's that?"

"I intend Billy to have advantages."

"Advantages?" Courtnay lifted his head in question.

"Yes, sir, advantages. I want Billy to be a fine man. He 's got a good head, and his legs are straight, and I mean him to have advantages."

Courtnay looked off into the woods opposite.

"How are you going to manage?"

"Well, sir, I don't just know yet, but seems to me next year I ought to be able to find something to do. Maybe copying or something like that. And I think I can begin to get together a little money, and if Billy's only two and a half years old, I'll have ten or twelve years to save it before he'll be through school here. I want him to go away to a big place and learn a great deal. I have a great many plans for Billy."

Courtnay tapped his boot-toe with his crop's leather loop.

"What do you expect to make of him?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I think a lawyer. A lawyer does n't need any capital, you see. I know I could n't manage capital, so it's no use thinking about Billy's going into any business that needs it. But he could be a lawyer."

Courtnay continued to tap his boot.

"Will your father allow it?" he asked.

There was a little hush.

"My father won't be alive then," said the boy

gently. "He 's dying of consumption. That 's been one of the troubles."

"Oh, good heavens!" said Courtnay, sharply, and folded his hands tightly about his golden crop-handle, and looked straight down at his corduroy knees, and thought.

"I think, if you 'll excuse me, sir," said the boy after a little, "that I must take Billy to the house now. He 's rubbing his eyes, and that shows it 's time for his nap. You 've been very kind to us, and I thank you very much for the sugar, but I think we 'll have to go now."

"Wait a bit," Courtnay exclaimed hastily. "I — I — can you tell me where your father banks?"

He looked up as he spoke, and the boy looked down.

"He owes the mortgage to Mr. Chase's bank, sir," he answered.

Courtnay had never thought of that way of banking before.

"How far is it to the house?" he asked, rising.

"Oh, not so very far, sir; just over the hill."

"I 'll carry him up there for you."

"Oh, sir — oh no, indeed, sir — no, if you please. It is n't far, and I always put him down once or twice. Oh, I could n't let you, sir."

"Come, Billy," said the young man holding out his arms, "come on, old fellow. See how you like me for a horse."

Billy, his thumb still in his mouth, suffered him-

self to be picked off the stile, and hoisted into strange arms. He did not protest, only keeping a close eye on his brother with a certain anxious tension in his expression.

Courtney preferred not to look at the small figure that moved beside him at they went towards the house. His heart was piteously acheful over that halting walk.

It was a poor and desolate house when they did come to it. No need to give any fuller description. A slatternly woman was hanging some rags over a broken rack at the side.

"Well," she said with emphasis when she saw the party.

"That is Mrs. Bates," said the boy. "She comes every week and sees to us. Mrs. Bates, this is a very kind gentleman who has been talking to Billy and me."

Courtney put down the baby, went up to the woman, and gave her half a dollar. She looked at him in surprise.

"He ought not to carry the baby," said Courtney simply. "The baby's too heavy for him."

"He ain't good for nothin' else," said the woman, half explaining, half apologetic; "an' he ain't got no idea o' nothin' only havin' that baby's legs not like his."

Courtney offered his hand to the boy.

"Good-bye," he said; "we'll meet again soon."

"Good-bye, sir," said the boy.

Courtney turned and went back to Laura. He slipped her bridle over her head, threw himself into the saddle, and rode away. He felt so very, very quiet, somehow.

Two hours later he entered the bank and went directly into Mr. Chase's private room.

"Mr. Chase," he said abruptly, "there's a consumptive man out on the Pegwell Road who has given you a mortgage on his farm?"

"Yes, that's so," said Chase. "Do you know him?"

"No," said Courtney, "but I know his son, and on account of the boy I want to pay the mortgage up in full, interest and all. Give me a blank cheque."

Mr. Chase looked at him. Courtney was biting his lip; he had never done anything along this line before, and he hated to look queer or be talked of. He asked the sum, wrote the cheque, and handed it over.

"D—don't say anything to anyone, please," he said. "And—and if the man wants to borrow again, just—just let him, will you?"

"Yes, Mr. Courtney, I will," said Mr. Chase.

Then Courtney went to the village doctor, a comfortable, rosy old gentleman.

"When a child's legs are crooked—awfully crooked," he asked, "can anything be done?"

"For how old a child?"

"Oh, ten or eleven."

"Yes, much can be done," said the doctor.

So Courtney took a chair in front of him, and poured out all his wishes as to Billy's brother.

It is so easy to do good when you have money. The possibilities just grouped themselves about like fairy work as Courtney listened to the doctor. Although the doctor could not treat deformities himself, he was expecting a friend for a short visit within a week or two who was a more than well-known specialist. It was proposed that Billy and his brother be invited to visit indefinitely at the doctor's house, where two unmarried daughters could take charge of their needs, while Courtney footed the bills. This arrangement was made, and then our birthday hero rode home. Laura was hungry and disposed to hurry, but her rider was thoughtful — more thoughtful than ever.

When he turned in among his own roses and saw the white of the house gleaming through the green there beyond, he felt the odd sensation of choking again. He gave Laura to the groom, who came out from somewhere at the sound of her clattering hoofs, and went straight up to his room. Owens was there, but he shook his head shortly, although pleasantly.

"Not yet," he said. "I want to be alone for a little."

The man went out at once and left him by him-

self. He crossed to his desk, took the two photographs of Nellie in his hands, and sat down. His eyes went back and forth, back and forth between the pictures.

Presently he took them and himself to the big chair by the window, and there he continued to contemplate them. After a little he found, to his surprise, that his eyes were wet. "I have been a stupid, selfish brute," he said aloud. And then he put the pictures back in their places and rang for his valet.

"You might put together my things," he said. "I'm going away for a few days; I'm going alone."

"Yes, sir," said Owens, respectfully.

"And tell them down at the stables not to do anything more about that horse."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Owens, here's something to divide up among you all; it's my birthday to-day."

"Is that so, sir? Thank you very much. Many happy returns, sir."

"Thank you," said Courtney; and then, all of a sudden, he knew his eyes to be wet again. He turned to the window; he felt a real impatience over so much unmanliness.

"By Jove!" he said to himself. "Have I turned into a baby?" And then a smile crept about his lips. "That's it," he murmured; "I keep howling because I'm so new. Reborn, so to speak."

LITTLE SISTER AND BABY*

I

At the top of the third flight of stairs she always had to stop and rest. She used to stand there with one hand on the rail and feel that if it had not been for Little Sister and Baby she never, never could have got started again. The end always seemed miles farther on as she paused at the top of the third flight, but she was so regular in the way and hour of her homecoming, that as she stood there panting the same noise always sounded overhead, and that noise always gave her strength to go on almost at once.

The noise was the noise of a squeaky, opening door followed by the sound of little feet. The squeaky door was Betty's own door, and the pattering feet were the feet of Little Sister and Baby. When the clock struck the half hour Little Sister always opened the door, and she and Baby came out into the hall and perched on the highest step of all the many curling, climbing steps that led the way up to there, and then they sat and waited for Mamma. Little Sister always held

* Originally printed under the title "The Christmas Joy that came to Betty."

Baby's hand for fear that Baby might fall down the stairs, and Baby, who had no responsibility at all — not even the responsibility of keeping her small self from rolling downstairs — always devoted all her mentality to looking earnestly downward to where an additional shadow of the unlighted way was invariably to develop two minutes later into a mother whose tired pallor was ever ready to flush rosy at the hugs and kisses awaiting her above.

Betty always heard them come out and always drew her breath deeper as she listened. It was such a joy to hear their little voices whispering — such a joy to know that they were awaiting her. For twelve hours to come they were sure to stay all safe — safe in her arms — for Betty loved her babies passionately.

After a minute she went on up the fourth flight. It seemed so very long to-night, and her heart labored horribly. And the fifth flight was still to come. "Oh, God — oh, God!" she murmured, as she felt her breath deserting her to the point of faintness. And then she felt something worse than any failing breath — she felt the paper rustle in her bosom, and its suggestion carried away the last remnant of her strength.

"Dat you, Mamma?" Little Sister cried from above.

"At oo, Mamma?" Baby cried too.

"Yes," said Betty, "yes — in — in just a minute, my darlings." And then she sank down on the lowest

step of the fifth flight and knew that it all was awfully, woefully near to its ending. The paper rustled afresh as she panted for breath, and it sickened her afresh. She looked up at her children who sat above there in the beam of light from the open door, and their faces smiled upon her. Little Sister's hair encircled her head like a halo of gold, and Baby's hair suggested a ring of woven sunbeams. Betty tried to smile up at them, although they could not see her face in the darkness, but her smile quivered away, and the merciful shadows drew a veil over what it merged into. Then in a minute she arose, and toiled up the last flight to where their eagerness was waiting to be kissed.

"You're very tired," said observant Little Sister, as they all three entered the room together.

"Berry ti'ed," said Baby, pressing close.

Betty nodded as she hung up her hat and jacket. "Is tea all ready?" she asked. It seemed as if she must eat before she could speak.

Little Sister hurried importantly about.

The table was set with its poor array of cups and spoons, and in the middle on a plate was the very small end of a loaf of bread. Betty's eyes fell on the bread while Little Sister was winding her hand up in an old strip of black merino preparatory to lifting the boiling kettle from the oil-stove.

"Is n't there more bread than that?" she asked.

Little Sister carefully set the kettle down, unwound

her hand and arm, and then came around in front of her mother. Baby came instantly and stood beside her.

"Mamma," said Little Sister, "it was Baby."

"It wad me," said Baby.

"She was so hungry to-day," said Little Sister.

"I wud to hundry," said Baby.

"She took the loaf and cut a big piece for herself," said Little Sister, earnestly.

"I tut a bit peet for myset," said Baby.

"And then she cut another," said Little Sister, her eyes widening ever so slightly, "and she ate it, too."

"An' 'en I tut anudder," said Baby, "an' I ate 'at too."

Little Sister's hand bent forth and took Baby's little hand close in its clasp.

"She was so hungry," said Little Sister, softly.

"I wud to hungry," said Baby, also softly.

Betty leaned her head upon her hand and looked at them both, and then at the small piece of bread. She had no strength to go and buy more, but that was not the worst of it. "No strength" is sad enough and pitiful enough, Heaven knows, but "no strength" going hand in hand with "no money" is the saddest and most pitiful thing in all the wide world.

"You're not vexed?" said Little Sister, without any anxiety in her tone.

"Oo not 'exed?" said Baby.

Betty shook her head, and then she took the bit of

bread up in her fingers and broke it slowly in two and laid it on their two plates.

"Don't you want mine?" said Little Sister.

Betty shook her head again and tried hard to smile. She had to lay a steadying hand upon her heart as she made the effort, and the paper rustled again. She looked at Little Sister and she looked at Baby, and then she rose and went and opened the window a little and breathed the cold, damp air deep into her lungs.

When she turned the bread had disappeared, and Little Sister was pouring out the tea. "Drink some, Mamma," she said.

Betty sat down and drank some, and then she remained sitting there while Little Sister undressed Baby and put her into the wide bed and undressed herself and crept in after her. Betty got up then and went over and kissed them both, and they clasped their arms about her neck and smiled, and turned upon their pillows and went to sleep.

When they were asleep she unfastened her dress and took out the paper and opened it and turned to the place. Her heart was burning her with a tearing sensation of contending emotions. She glanced towards the bed and then turned her eyes resolutely down upon the page and read:

WANTED, to adopt, a little golden-haired
girl between three and six years of age.
APPLY SUNDAY, 48 MAYFAIR.

Little Sister was six and Baby was three, and they each had hair as soft and yellow as the liquid light that fills the sunset world.

Betty sat with her tired head supported on her tired hands for a long half hour. Then finally she slipped from her chair on to her knees and tried to pray. But she could not. All she could see was Little Sister alone. Or Baby alone. And the long, sad days. And the ceaseless struggle. And then at last she found herself so near to falling on the floor that she summoned her last atom of physical force and tottered to the bed and fell into the place they left for her, a place which always let her stretch one arm across Little Sister so that her hand rested on Baby's regular breathing. They were still both hers to-night at all events, and the hot tears came storming at the thought. And then her great exhaustion overpowered even her tortured mind, and she slept — slept dreamlessly and for long hours.

II

It was a lovely Sunday — a Sunday like spring. No one who was unaccustomed to that envious individual — the Weather-God of London — would ever have supposed that Christmas was but three days away. The air was bright and clear, the blue mist rested softly among the soft, brown bareness of the trees in the parks, the grass was sweet and green,

and the world seemed ready to burst into bloom three months ahead of time.

On top of an omnibus lumbering up the aristocratic length of Park Lane sat Betty, Little Sister, and Baby. All three were dressed in a best that was as pitiful as it was courageous, and Betty's heart matched her poor dress through and through. Little Sister had a darn in her shoe, and a darned shoe means a good deal. Baby's hands were bare and red, and for Baby's hands to be bare and red meant a good deal, too. Both the children were all wonder over the beautiful park and the beautiful carriages and the beautiful horses and the beautiful people. Their little hearts knew nothing but joy and open-eyed amazement at the prospect. Betty smiled when they spoke and tried not to think. She kept her eyes fixed on the park, and bit her lip to keep from considering what the right home would be like after she knew which child was to be given up. That one of hers would be chosen she never doubted, for she knew all too well that such violet eyes as Baby's had never looked up from under such long, black lashes before, and as to Little Sister — oh, Little Sister was a fairy out of God's garden, and an angel out of His Heaven and nothing less.

"It's so beautiful," said Little Sister, looking up at her mother just then.

"To booful," said Baby.

Betty smiled.

Then after a little it came their turn to get down, and her heart began to choke her as she went up the stately side street with its row of grand, silent, unsympathetic-looking houses. Number 48 was especially grand, silent, and unsympathetic-looking, and there was a man in livery in front who seemed stationed there on purpose to warn those whose misery drove them to the borderland of desperation away from the great door of wood and gold. There was a way that led down underneath the grandeur, and that was the way that Betty and her children took, and which led them, after ten minutes of most overawing experience, to where they found themselves alone together in a small red room. A bright fire burned there, and the chairs were too soft for words. Betty sat timidly down, and Little Sister took another chair and perched modestly on its extreme edge, but Baby climbed way up and into the biggest and softest chair in the room, and folded her tiny red hands in her lap and sighed a big sigh of utter pleasure.

After a few minutes the door opened, and a voice that seemed to belong to the hand that opened it said in stately tones: "Here, my lady."

And then something as pretty as Little Sister and Baby — either or both — came into the room.

The something was a young lady — a very young lady, all cream and roses and silk and gold. Her hair and her eyes and her lips and her smile were all

as perfect as hair and eyes and lips and smile can be. Her dress was rose, and great folds and falls of lace flowed over it. Around her waist a great golden rope was knotted, on her fingers were sparkling gems, on her wrists were more gems, on her white throat were still more gems. She was beautiful and dazzling, and dazzlingly beautiful, and as Betty and the children stared in an utter wonder that killed alike their speech and their manners, the lovely Vision cried :

"Oh, the dear little golden-heads! They are real little golden-heads! These are exactly what I wanted."

Betty was standing, and Little Sister had risen too, but Baby was still and dumb.

"Are they sisters?" the Vision asked, addressing Betty, but never lifting her eyes from the two children.

"Yes, my lady," said Betty.

"Are they yours?"

"Yes, my lady."

"I want them both!"

There was a curious hush in the room — it seemed to the poor mother — and then the Vision spoke again :

"Yes, I want them both. They are too dear. They will be so sweet to dress and shop for."

She swept down on her knees by Baby then, and all the pink and white and gold of her wonderful gown encircled Baby and her poor little coat and her red little hands.

"Think of it," the Vision exclaimed : "a dolly and

a dolly-tub, a little dog to lead by a chain, and cakes, and tea, and a white frock with a big, broad belt! Only think of it!"

As Baby knew very little of any of the delights thus vividly portrayed to her small imagination she was not greatly affected by this speech, but Little Sister knew and drew nearer. Betty stood still, and her heart seemed dripping tears within her — tears of blood.

"A little room," continued the Vision, "and a dear little bed, and a little chair and table, and a little pair of slippers, and a little warm gown to tuck up in each night!"

Little Sister was looking very earnest. "She is warm nights," she said; "I hold her."

"Her holds me," said Baby.

Oh, the poor mother! standing listening.

"And you, too, little one," said the Vision; "you'll have just the same — just exactly the same. I want you both. I must have you both." Then she rose and turned to Betty. "I can have them both — can't I?" she asked. "It will save you such a lot of trouble."

Betty did not look at the children — she looked at the fire. She felt as if her last hour had come. She thought perhaps this was the way in which the good God had planned to care for Little Sister and Baby. She kept on looking at the fire. But she bowed her head. The Vision still turned towards her.

"Can't they stay now?" the Vision asked; "then I can take them out early to-morrow morning and buy them things. I want to buy them so many things. And then there's Christmas." At the words she turned to Baby again. "A great big tree," she exclaimed, "and candles and bonbons and dancing paper dollies and chains of silver and gold. And everything that we can find that's fun to play with!"

Little Sister's cheeks were deepening in color.

"You will leave them, won't you?" the Vision asked again, and just as she spoke the door opened, and a footman entered bearing a tray with oranges and little currant biscuit.

The children's faces at the sight told a long story, and decided the mother. If a world of warmth and food was open to those little hungry mouths, to those little delicate bodies, she would not stand in their way.

"You'll leave them, won't you?" said the Vision for the third time. And poor Betty bowed her head.

"Can I come and see them?" she asked in a very low tone, and not looking at them — not daring to look at them, in fact.

"Of course," said the Vision; "come on Christmas and see how happy they will be. Come when you like."

Betty never knew why she did what she did next, for she crossed the room to the door as quickly as she could, ran out through the hall, through another hall, found an open door into a court, and an archway that led from a court into the street, and then,

dizzy, frightened, her heart one racking pain of unutterable misery, she somehow found her way home.

Oh, the stairs — the stairs! With no Little Sister and Baby at the top. How she climbed them she could never guess afterward. The fire was out and the room was cold. She undressed and went to bed. The bed was cold and empty as her aching, breaking heart. After a long time she slept, and she slept until the milliner who lived in the next room woke her next day to know what had become of the children. Betty told her in a cold, stony way that she had given them both away. The milliner thought that she had done wisely.

Ah, well, perhaps she had!

She was too ill to go to the shop, and the next day, too, but on the third morning she remembered that it was Christmas and that she could go to see them, and somehow strength came back at the thought, and she crept out of bed and made some tea and soaked the hard bread that had stood on the table for three days, and ate it.

And then life looked a bit better, and she dressed and sat by the window, and outside Christmas was reigning fair and bright.

III

I SUPPOSE that Betty was very weak, or perhaps she was weary with much thinking of many thoughts,

but at any rate she fell asleep there by the window, and her head lay on the window ledge and one hand clung hard to her chair for support. She slept an hour or so and then she woke suddenly, and her first thought on waking was that death had come to her and that Paradise was about her.

It was the squeaking of the squeaky door that startled her back to life, and her eyes as they opened beheld that which meant Paradise to her, life and love.

Little Sister and Baby stood before her.

Little Sister was dressed in a lilac-velvet coat, with a big black hat tied under her chin in a big black bow. She had on black gaiters and a little, soft, furry tippet and a big, soft, furry muff, and deep in the soft fur nestled a lilac bow. She had little gloves and a little pocket-handkerchief, and in her arms she held a huge doll whose costume was a replica in miniature of her own.

Baby was beside her in pink velvet, also a big black hat, also black gaiters. But a smaller furry tippet and a smaller furry muff. Also small gloves and a tiny pocket-handkerchief. Also a doll dressed like herself.

Smash went both dolls' heads as both dolls struck the floor with united bang. And in the next instant Betty and her babies were reunited. Little Sister's arms were about her mother's neck and Baby was clinging close in the angle of her arm and crushing

the big hat into a new and curious shape against her bosom.

"We were lonesome," sobbed Little Sister.

"We wud 'onesome," echoed Baby.

Betty did n't know care, or past, or future, in that minute. She only knew that she had them in her arms again.

While the hugging and kissing were still going on, and no one of the three knew anything but its sweetness, the door gave another squeak, and a big, rosy old gentleman entered the room. Betty gave a little cry of surprise, and the children raised their heads to see what was the matter, and, seeing the old gentleman, did not appear to consider his entry as any matter at all.

"He brought us back," said Little Sister.

"B'ought us back," said Baby.

"Merry Christmas," said the old gentleman, "and thank God that I was able to bring them back!"

Betty tried to put the children one side so that she might rise, but he saw her intention and crossed to her and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"Please don't," he said; "I'll sit down and tell you about it, and then we'll all four go back to the Christmas tree together."

"Oh, the biggest tree!" cried Little Sister.

"The biddest tree!" cried Baby.

"And two little maidens standing before it this morning," said the gentleman — "two little maidens

with tears streaming down their cheeks, because nothing was pretty and no present was what they wanted until Mamma could be found, and no one, no one, no one knew where Mamma had come from nor where Mamma had gone back to."

"We took a cab to hunt," cried Little Sister, her cheeks flushing suddenly crimson.

"A tab," cried Baby.

"There was nothing else to do," said the gentleman; "everyone in the house was half insane with trying to think of a way to find Mamma, and it needed me to discover it, after all. I took a cab, and as Little Sister and Baby both remembered the park, we drove by the park until we came to a monument where Little Sister remembered changing to another 'bus. Then we drove slowly up and down some of the streets until Baby remembered a red parasol hanging over a shop door. Then we drove a very long way along that street until Little Sister saw the bridge that she came over on Sunday. And so we found our way back here at last."

"Oh, sir," said Betty, "I hope that all your life you may be rewarded for what you have done. They are my life, and my life was going — because they were gone."

"Ah," said the gentleman, "that is what I must speak of at once. You must not suffer further — nor they. I have measured it all — twice over. There were two little daughters came one after another into

our lives, and went away as they came and left us desolate. That is why, when the third came, we were never quite able to cross her in any way, and as a consequence I'm afraid she's very spoiled indeed. She's had all her fancies indulged and all her wishes gratified from her babyhood, for we can't seem to do anything except be so very happy just to know she's ours. So, when I had her letter she wanted to adopt a child, of course I wrote her that she could do it, but I did n't quite expect to find just what I found when I arrived home last night — two weeping babies who wanted their mother, and whose mother's name and address no one had thought to write down."

"We cried," said Little Sister, laying her soft cheek against her mother's.

"We tried hard," said Baby, nestling closer even than she had nestled before.

The gentleman rose and began to pace the narrow room.

"All this won't do, you know," he began presently. "All this must be changed. Little Sister and Baby cannot come back here to live, and neither can they spare a mother out of their daily lives. I think I had better explain at once that as no household is big enough to spare a maid to attend to two unexpected babies, suppose I offered you the position. Maude will not give the children up now, but after a while she'll be leaving town, and she'll leave it to travel where children do not go. When she leaves we all

leave, and I'm thinking that in Camberley there's a big place with a pretty lodge where Maude's old nurse lives all alone with her son. It's just the place for Little Sister and Baby and their mother. There's a school in the village, and all the garden and some of the wood to play in. There's a pony-cart and chickens and other little children and fresh air, all very necessary to a good bringing up. I think that's the best way to settle the matter. What do you think?"

Betty's thoughts were overpowering and speechless. She could only lift her eyes.

The old gentleman became quite busy and bustling at once.

"Very well, then," he said, holding out his hand; "come, Baby, you and I'll go and find a four-wheeler while Little Sister helps Mamma to get ready, and then we'll hurry back to the Christmas tree."

"Such a beautiful tree," said Little Sister, hugging her mother ecstatically.

"A booful, booful, booful tree," said Baby, with three hugs on her own account.

And then all three laid their heads together once more.

"Is n't it a nice Christmas?" Little Sister asked when she lifted her face from her mother's shoulder.

"A nice Titmus," echoed Baby.

And no sunshine and no Christmas Day that ever has been or ever will be have seen more joy than swelled in Betty's heart.

AN OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOL

THE very evening before they had been speaking of it, had Edith's parents.

"She *must* begin to be educated this autumn," had said Mrs. Baring.

"Of course," said Mr. Baring.

"And I don't know *what* to do," went on the mother. "I can't send my little girl, so carefully trained and guarded, to spend several hours a day at the public school, and as for Miss Dallas's Girls' School, it's an absolute farce; the little ones don't get any attention, and the bigger girls don't get much. There's something all wrong about our schools, anyway. I wish that some one would open a real old-fashioned school."

It was the very next morning that the small, plain card with "Marie D'Aveau" written on it was brought to Mrs. Baring by the parlor maid.

"Who is it, Kate?" she asked.

"It's a stranger, ma'am. A foreign looking young lady."

Mrs. Baring went down, and in the corner of the

reception room she found sitting a little figure that went to her heart at once.

A delicate looking French girl with profoundly large eyes, a sweet oval face, and the quiet composure and reserve of the Old World.

"Mrs. Baring?" she questioned, rising.

"I am Mrs. Baring."

"I have come to speak to you about a school — a school that I want to make."

Probably some wave of joy shot over the American's face at this, for the French girl reflected it quickly.

"I may tell you of it?" she asked, smiling.

"Oh, yes, please do. Pray be seated."

They both sat down.

"Thank you. Yes, I will tell you. I must first tell you that I come here because Father Caillet is a cousin of my mother's. It is he who is helping me. But it will not be a Catholic school."

"Pray tell me all about it," said Mrs. Baring.

"I shall be pleased to do so, madame. You will know that I have taught little children for three years in my convent in France. I hoped to become a nun and teach always. God has willed otherwise, and the convent has been suppressed. I may not enter another because I have need of money for some one else. Therefore I want to open a school. They tell me that here in America you need such schools. So I am come here."

"We surely need schools," said Mrs. Baring with a little smile.

"Yes, madame, — they tell me that you are very poorly supplied with proper schools for the littlest children. I want only little girls between five and seven. I want twelve if I can get so many. I can teach them to read and write, to count, to sing, and to speak in French. I have a certificate for that. If madame will look!" She unfolded a paper which she had been holding in her left hand and held it out.

Mrs. Baring took it and glanced over its contents. It was a diploma in French — regularly made out and signed.

"You speak English very well," she said, as she handed it back.

"Yes, madame, my mother is English. I have spoken her tongue with her all my life. It is she who gave me the idea to open a school. I thought of England, but there they have governesses and do not need schools as much as here."

"I fancy that is very true," said Mrs. Baring.

"I can take the little room next to mine in my boarding house — if I need it — and have the little ones there," continued Mlle. D'Aveau. "I am very hopeful that I may succeed."

There was something quite convincing in her few words and earnest manner. I need not prolong this portion of my story any further than to add that she

accomplished her desire, and the little school opened on the first Monday in September.

It was felt that it was to be a funny school, and the little girls all felt very funny over being sent to it. Some disapproved outright — but they all were willing to make the trial.

When they arrived, they found rather a bare room with twelve very plain little desks, and a desk for Mlle. Marie. On each desk lay a pencil, a pad of paper, and a box of such letters as we use in playing the game called "Letters." There was a black-board on the wall by Miss Marie's desk, and at the other end of the room was another. There were no other furnishings in the room.

It was neither pretty, nor pleasant, nor inviting. They all looked rather downcast as they passed through it to the bedroom beyond.

The bedroom was better, although the bed had no pillows and was simply covered with a big piece of green cloth. They took off their hats, and Miss Marie kissed them each on the forehead. Then she went to the closet and brought out twelve funny little black aprons with high necks and long sleeves.

"This is a French school," she said, smiling, "and you must all wear the uniform in school-house."

They looked at each other in great surprise and submitted to each being buttoned into her own apron.

"And I am not 'Miss', but 'Mademoiselle,'" continued their teacher. "Please don't forget."

They all repeated "Mademoiselle" with a funny unaccustomed mumble of the unaccustomed syllable.

"Now you must all be measured," Mlle. Marie announced next, "for we want to see who will grow the most before Noël."

"Who is Noël?" asked Maude.

"You must say 'Mademoiselle' whenever you speak to me, dear," said the little teacher with a smile. "Noël is your Christmas."

Then she measured them all against the inside of her bedroom door, and the measuring was soothing and agreeable to their perturbed spirits.

"Now we will go to school," she announced when that was over. "I shall go first, and you will all follow two by two." She arranged them in couples according to their heights, and they followed her into the bare room.

When they were all at their desks she bowed her head and said a little prayer so earnestly that they all bowed their heads, too. Then she looked up, and they looked up, and everyone smiled.

"This is a very plain room," said Mlle. Marie. "It is like my little scholars, — it does not know anything yet. As they learn, you see, the room will learn, and so we shall all grow interesting together."

The idea amused the children.

"We will now begin."

Then very patiently and gently she set to work to discover how little they knew, and found that it was indeed very, very little. Three knew the alphabet, and four could count up to ten. The modern fear of overtaxing the youthful brain was very poignant in the land.

Mlle. Marie rose and printed a large alphabet on the blackboard. Then she called the three little girls who knew their letters to her side and made them repeat it aloud together.

"Now you must all make your own alphabet with your letters," she said.

It took nearly half an hour to accomplish.

"When this room knows the alphabet perfectly, I shall give it a picture," announced the teacher, and then she rang her little bell.

"We go now to become French," she said smiling, and rose and led them all back into the other room. There she opened her trunk and took out a large box, blue, and rather worn.

As she did so, she began to talk in French, but they could not understand her. She put the box on the bed and took off the cover, and one side fell out flat-ways, and they all saw at once that the box was a little farm scene with houses and people and animals packed into two divisions made to look like fences. Mlle. Marie began to take them out still talking in

the way that they could not understand, until finally Elsie cried suddenly,

"Why, every time she says 'Pshaw' she means that cat. It means cat in France, don't it, ma—mademoiselle?"

Mlle. Marie smiled radiantly, and Elsie clapped her hands over her own cleverness. Then they all began to want to learn the new names, and were charmed to find that the animals made the same old sounds that they were familiar with, even if they were given such novel titles.

Elsie was extremely sharp in learning what Mlle. Marie meant, and in translating her to the others, and I don't believe a half hour's French lesson was ever given so quickly in all the world before.

When they filed back into the other room, the three little girls who knew their alphabet were left behind to pick up the wonderful farm, and the rest applied themselves to learning *their* alphabets with marvelous vigor.

They counted later, they wrote (very badly), too, and they played a French singing game called "Sur le pont d'Avalon" in which Mlle. Marie did all the singing.

Then at noon they took off their little black aprons and were taught how to fold them and lay them, each on her own desk.

Then Mlle. Marie stood them all in a straight row, went and looked on every desk, and wrote

something in a little book that she wore hanging to her belt.

After that she taught them how to make a courtesy, how to say "Bonjour, mademoiselle," and then they went home.

This is a very simple little story, and I do not want to make it read like an attractive fairy-tale. Because those little girls in their little black aprons found it not at all like a fairy-tale. They never had another day just like the first one. The days grew harder — and more absorbing. They worked. And they worked extremely hard. Mlle. Marie had no idea of avoiding taxing them. She taxed them more and more. It was real study at the end of a month and real progress, and the rewards were wonderful. There was "le medaille" — an institution which was entirely new to them. It was a little silver medal, and on it were three French words which meant "God's Blessing On You." Every Friday when school finished, one little girl was called to the desk of Mlle. Marie, and received "le medaille" hung on a fresh pink ribbon, and was told why she received it, and was allowed to wear it until Monday morning. It passed pretty regularly around among them all in turn, and was the cause of a great deal of effort and a great deal of joy.

Then there was the furnishing of the schoolroom! When even little Bessie had learned the alphabet, there appeared one day up by the blackboard a

beautiful picture of the baby Jesus holding a little lamb. It was so beautiful that they could hardly study for looking at it. The day that they all counted up to a hundred correctly, a very little sprig of "Wandering Jew" peeped out of a vase on Mlle. Marie's desk. That was another delight, and they all kept track of every budding leaf that winter.

And no one minded that it was such an old-fashioned school. Not a father or mother objected to the antiquated methods employed there. While other children were busy pricking maps to learn the outlines of geography, the parents of Mlle. Marie's pupils were quite charmed to have them learning the names and relations of the countries themselves. There was no caviling over the steady study of the multiplication table and no objection whatever to the learning of the rules.

It was all curious, but eminently satisfactory to those concerned, and by the following June the twelve little girls were all nearly through the first reader, able to play "Sur le pont d'Avalon" without Mlle. Marie's guidance, to sing, to count and repeat their tables, and to play fairly well with the little French farm, *in French*.

But I want to speak of another phase of this old-fashioned school. It was the intense respect for order, for neatness, and for obedience that she taught, that the little French exile received the highest praise.

She was a lady and she never forgot it, and she never allowed her charges to forget it either. And they were ladies and she never forget that and never permitted them to do so.

School should teach so much, and just at present in our land it is teaching so little. It is almost impossible to find an American primary school where thoroughness is taught, where honor is taught, where an intelligent conception of the meaning of education itself is taught. That seems rather a hard saying, but it is a note which is being more and more often sounded by our most thoughtful minds. All those good things were taught in Mlle. Marie's school, and the children and their parents both profited by the results.

Nothing that is worth attaining can be quickly won. If chance decrees some great prize as the result of momentary action, rest assured that behind the action lay the untold smouldering forces of years. As a general rule all reward is commensurate with effort, and all effort, to be worth much, must be steady and prolonged. We don't begin soon enough with the little tots, and we let them skim too easily over the first difficulties. A difficulty should always be dismembered and done away with bit by bit, — it can no more be slighted than a contagious germ can be destroyed by burying it in the earth. "Out of sight — out of mind," undergoes quite a new application in this direction, and the illy-learned lesson is just

as sure of resurrection as the hastily-interred contagion.

We need old-fashioned schools, and we need them terribly. As a writer, as a reader, and as a mother, I am putting forth this cry. There are plenty of readers, and writers, and mothers, who will back me up in it. I am told by college professors that "the boys are not thoroughly prepared." I am told by foreign teachers that American students are almost never thoroughly grounded in their rudiments. I am told by the very best American teachers that our system, with its continuous changes of methods and books, is as much to blame as the under teachers with their uncertain tenure of office.

Won't some one come forward and start a crusade to give us back a fixed system of old-fashioned schools; just such little schools as I have pictured here? I am sure that there are hundreds and thousands of young ladies perfectly qualified to open such schools among us. And if they were encouraged they would be opened. Only a few pupils to each, but the teacher well paid, and the children well taught. *And* the discipline well maintained. American children have a world-wide reputation for misbehavior, and as the vices of children are never their own, the real burden of this absolutely truthful charge falls on the American parent. Can't we give the next generation a better reputation, a better education, and a better

200 YOUR CHILD AND MINE

example than the present one is getting? Can't we begin by raising them more simply, teaching them more obedience, and buying back for them at any price — *at any price* — the old-fashioned schools?

NOTE. — This little story, taken from the Minneapolis "Housekeeper," served to introduce a series of articles on American school problems. It seemed to voice a growing sentiment among American parents, and is included here on account of its favorable reception.

THE GERMAN EASTER AND THE EASTER RABBIT

DOROTHEA was looking out of the window at the red roofs of the village and the going round and round of the windmill. Her mamma was finishing a wee bit of sewing. Mademoiselle was picking up the tea things. It was about half past five o'clock and a bright day was just beginning to fade towards an April sundown.

"Is n't it going to be Easter next Sunday," Dorothea asked, in German.

"Of course it will be Easter next Sunday," said her mother in French, "we were saying so last evening at dinner."

"And so I'm going to have a German Easter this time," said Dorothea, with a cosmopolitan sigh. "I do hope that it will be something like a real Easter. It's ever so long since I've had a *real* Easter. Where were we last Easter, anyway?"

"We were in China," said Mademoiselle, who looked like a lovely Russian fairy princess, was German, and always spoke French; "don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, I remember now," said Dorothea.

Then she reflected for a little, adding, "I did n't think much of that Chinese Easter," and shook her head sadly in remembrance. "But where was I the year before?" she asked next.

Mademoiselle knit her brows and the mamma knit hers, too. Neither could think.

"I expect I was on a ship," said Dorothea, with the resigned air of one accustomed to many phases of life; "whenever no one knows where we were we're *always* on a ship."

"Oh, *such* grammar!" said the mamma.

"But we are not on a ship this Easter at all events," said Mademoiselle, putting the tea tray outside the door for Elise to get whenever the fancy should strike her. "This Easter we are here in Lichtenberg, and I see no reason why, if we make friends with the Easter Rabbit, we should not have a most successful Easter."

"Yes, but you'll be the rabbit," said Dorothea, always contemplating the windmill, "I know."

"No, I shall *not* be the rabbit," said Mademoiselle, returning to the tea table and standing near Dorothea. "How could I be a rabbit? I'm much too large."

"Mamma would dress you up," said Dorothea, "but even if you looked exactly like a rabbit, I'd know you. I know you *well*." Her tone bore emphasis.

"I suppose," Mademoiselle spoke slowly, "that

we could buy the eggs and buy the colors and color them ourselves."

At that Dorothea turned from the window.

"And we could paint some of them," Mademoiselle continued. Dorothea's attitude towards life altered suddenly.

"We could cook them in the fudge kettle," she exclaimed, "on the spirit lamp!"

"And we could hunt them in the woods on Easter morning," the mamma observed.

"Oh!" cried Dorothea, clasping her hands, "in the *woods*!"

"Of course," said Mademoiselle, smiling at her expression.

"And can I ask Elna?" cried Dorothea. "She'll have a holiday at Easter and we could hunt the eggs together."

"I have already asked Elna," said the mamma, "and Elna has accepted. She's coming Friday."

At this Dorothea forgot what a dismal thing a life full of variety may appear, and embraced both her mother and Mademoiselle. "If the Easter Rabbit was here I'd give him a hug too," she announced, widely liberal of caresses just this once.

"You must not laugh about the Easter Rabbit," said Mademoiselle, "he's very sensitive, and his feelings are most easily hurt. You must take him seriously."

"I'll take him seriously," Dorothea, instantane-

ously grave, promised; "Elna will take him seriously, too."

"Under those circumstances I will undertake to try to make friends with him," said Mademoiselle. "I've met him two or three times lately when I was alone in the woods, but we've never spoken to one another so far."

Dorothea threw herself into this view of the situation at once. "But you'll speak to him next time, won't you?" she said eagerly.

"Yes, I will," promised Mademoiselle.

Dorothea went close to her and whispered, "I know it'll really be you, but never mind."

"Oh, but it won't be I," said Mademoiselle, looking at her with a shocked expression.

Dorothea looked incredulous. "Well, we'll see," she said.

"Yes, we'll see," said Mademoiselle.

It was the very next day at tea that the definite plans began.

"Did you see the Rabbit?" Dorothea asked, the instant they were all seated at the table.

"Yes, I saw him," said Mademoiselle, with a reticence almost as fine as the Rabbit's own.

"Did you speak to him?"

"Yes —" Mademoiselle hesitated; "but I do not know that I ought to repeat what he said. He talked with me quite freely."

"What did he talk about, — Easter?"

"No, he talked about the unfriendliness of being shot at, mostly. He said it made the days so unpleasant just now."

"But he said something about Easter?"

"Yes, but — I'm not sure that I ought to repeat it. He did n't say that I must not, but — " she hesitated some more.

"Oh, tell me," pleaded Dorothea, "tell me and I won't tell Elna. That'll make it a secret for *someone*."

Mademoiselle looked extremely thoughtful. "I hardly like to tell you without the Rabbit's direct permission," she said; "but I'll tell you what I will do, — I'll ask him to-morrow afternoon."

"Are you going to see him again to-morrow?"

"Dear me, yes," said Mademoiselle, "he promised me that whenever he saw me alone he would hurry to overtake me so that we could talk. There's so much to arrange about."

"He does n't hurry to overtake you when I'm with you," said Dorothea, "he scurries then — scurries the other way."

"I expect he feels more at ease with me than he would with you," said Mademoiselle; "you see he and I are both German."

"You are *not* German," said Dorothea, who had taken a great antipathy to the German nation since she had begun to investigate its grammar, — "you're a slave — you said so."

"I never said that I was a slave," said Mademoiselle.

"Well, then, your grandmother was. You said so."

"She means Slav," said the mamma, handing their teacups.

"Oh," said Mademoiselle, "that's quite another thing."

"Is it?" said Dorothea, indifferently; but then her interest veered sharply. "Oh, I wish it was to-morrow and that you could tell me what the Rabbit said!"

The next day was one of a beautiful spring-like seeming. They all went out and Dorothea and her mother gathered flowers while Mademoiselle strolled off alone to meet the Easter Rabbit. She joined them on their homeward way and it was easy to see from her general air that the Rabbit had been most agreeable.

"He says that he has ordered the eggs and that we shall find them on our return home to-day," she said, "and the egg dyes will come by to-night's post. He was perfectly willing that I should repeat all he said, only he wants to keep his Easter surprises a secret until Elna comes. He sent greetings, and he said if possible he was intending to drop in Easter before breakfast."

"Oh, but he won't do *that*," said Dorothea, "that'll be you — or Mamma."

"Wait and see," said Mademoiselle.

THE GERMAN EASTER

207

"I'll wait — but I know," said Dorothea. "Mamma will try to dress you up to look like a rabbit, but you won't fool *me*."

"Wait and see," said Mademoiselle, again.

When they reached home the eggs were actually there, all neatly packed in a great basket. The evening post brought the dyes exactly as the Rabbit had said. Dorothea began to accept his advices seriously at this, and after supper she assisted Mademoiselle in boiling the eggs hard in the fudge kettle. It was rather trying and took a long time, but no one suggested so prosaic a solution of the difficulty as sending the eggs to the kitchen range downstairs.

A mysterious box from Berlin arrived the next day and sat in the corner of the mamma's room. No one mentioned its presence but every one knew that it was there. The air of things was getting to be one of general festivity.

The eggs were dyed red, yellow, purple, and blue. Also Mademoiselle painted some most beautifully, and made cheerful little faces on others with frilled bonnets. Dorothea helped with all this and Mademoiselle retailed the Rabbit's directions whenever she found them necessary.

It was so pleasant doing things according to the Easter Rabbit's rules. It added a peculiar charm even to washing the fudge kettle. The next day Elna was to come and the Rabbit was so interested.

He told Mademoiselle that he was especially anxious that all should be ready before Elna's arrival.

Elna arrived on the 3.40 train and all was ready, ready and stowed away, all but the mysterious box from Berlin which still sat in the mamma's room.

They had a gala tea for Elna, all the more gala because Elna had brought a large box of cakes with her. It does cheer up a country tea when the guest from town brings a large box of cakes with her.

"We're all ready for Easter now," said Dorothea, gazing contentedly upon Elna; then she turned to Mademoiselle, — "Did you see the Rabbit to-day? Did he say he'd come?"

"What rabbit?" asked Elna.

"The Easter Rabbit," explained Dorothea, "he meets Mademoiselle in the woods and talks with her."

"Talks with her?" said Elna, incredulously.

Dorothea felt stung. "It's really just Mademoiselle herself," she explained quickly.

"Wait until to-morrow and see if it is I," said Mademoiselle.

"Then Mamma's the Rabbit," said Dorothea, who wished to prove to Elna that she could also disbelieve if necessary.

Dorothea's mamma, who was a reticent lady, merely smiled.

"Wait until to-morrow and see," said Mademoiselle again.

"If she dresses up like a rabbit we'll know her right off by the size," Dorothea pointed out to Elna.

"I'm not going to dress up like a rabbit," said Mademoiselle, "although in the Ice Age there were doubtless rabbits as large as I am."

"Oh, now you're trying to make yourself out all right for an Easter Rabbit. Aha! aha!" cried Dorothea.

"Wait till to-morrow and see," said Mademoiselle. It was getting to be her standard remark.

It was very hard getting them to bed, as Dorothea was sure that it was her mother and Mademoiselle who were just waiting till they were in bed to do the Rabbit's work for him. But at last both bed and sleep became accomplished facts.

The next day was the sweetest Easter Day upon which the sun had ever shone. The sun perceived that the very first beam that he threw out over Salder. The birds who had arrived from the south as well as those who had remained north for the winter all remarked the fact, and the deer came tipping softly out of the deeper forest to listen to the early church chimes and nibble at the fresh spring green that was bursting forth wherever the March sun had been shining warmest.

As soon as Dorothea opened her eyes she gave one little cry of joy over the bright sunshine, and the cry awakened Elna. The next instant they were

both out of bed and trying to put on their slippers because they heard Elise building the fire in the next room, and they had privately agreed the evening before to run and prove the presence or absence of the Easter Rabbit with Elise as an unimpeachable witness.

There was an egg in each slipper, however, and that altogether altered their plans for a few minutes. They climbed back into bed with the eggs and opened them. They were nice, clean, wooden eggs and opened neatly. One contained a tea set and one contained "Max and Moritz," — one contained a whole toy farm, and one contained a lively black mouse and the key to make him run.

When they had investigated the eggs they returned to their original intention and, slipping on their slippers, ran softly out into the corridor. It was so still that they thought that Elise had gone back downstairs; they went to the door and their hearts beat very fast as Dorothea turned the handle.

But Elise had locked the door and taken the key away with her. They were obliged to giggle over their own disappointment, take a little turn at the gymnasium rings, and return to their room.

"Let us dress and go out in the woods," Elna suggested, and Dorothea thought that they might as well.

They dressed quickly, and each little girl tied the other's hair ribbon most neatly. Then they tip-

toed past Mademoiselle's door, slipped down the stairs, raced out the front door and across the little court, and were free, out in the soft, sweet stillness of the Easter forest.

It was beautiful beyond words. There were no this-year's leaves overhead but the first green things were peeping up through the last-year's leaves underfoot. Not one but thousands of Jacks were preparing their pulpits, and little blue flowers were daring and frequent. They picked some breakfast bouquets, chattering as briskly as the birds the while, and then, looking towards the house and their windows, they saw Mademoiselle smiling forth upon them from one window and Elise from another. The conjunction seeming to prophesy breakfast, they raced home and found that they had guessed right.

Mademoiselle met them at the head of the stairs, her cheeks quite as pink as their own. "Hush, hush," she said with uplifted warning hand, "you must take care not to frighten the Rabbit. He's there."

"Is there a rabbit really there?" Dorothea exclaimed in astonishment. She never for one second had believed in the Rabbit.

"Yes, he's there," said Mademoiselle.

"Is n't it Mamma with her furs on?"

"I don't think so. I've been hearing such strange noises, you can't think. They did n't sound like your mamma."

"Why have n't you been to look?" asked Dorothea.

"Because we must all go in together."

"Oh!"

The mamma came out of her room now, and they all gathered around the Rabbit's door.

"The box from Berlin?" whispered Dorothea.

"It's gone," whispered her mamma, opening her eyes widely.

"Oh!" whispered Dorothea, feeling some awe.

Then Mademoiselle opened the door, and they all went into the bright, sunny morning-room.

The table was spread with the most bewildering decorations, and flowers bloomed everywhere. Moorchen, the black poodle, was chained with a new chain to the sofa leg and wagged his tail without rising, being fully conscious of his chain even if it was new.

Mademoiselle caught their hands and pointed to a white chalk line across the floor.

"Dear me," she said, "the Rabbit told me to draw your attention to that line at once, and I'd almost forgotten. He said that he should hide a few eggs to the right of it for Elna and to the left for Dorothea."

"I *said* it was you," said Dorothea, her awe suddenly evaporating.

Elna gave a gasp so that they all jumped and looked at her. She was standing still, her eyes perfectly round, and her face perfectly white.

"What is it?" cried Dorothea, "what is it?"

"It's the Rabbit!" said Elna with another gasp.

"It's the Easter Rabbit!"

"The Rabbit!"

"Yes, the Rabbit."

"Where?"

"There — behind the stove!"

Dorothea rushed to her friend's side. Yes, there — actually *there* — sat the Easter Rabbit behind the stove. He had on a huge Easter bow and was eating a bit of Easter cabbage in the most unconcerned and un-Easterlike manner.

"Oh!" gasped Dorothea in her turn, — "oh, me, — oh, he's *real*. Oh!"

"Of course he's real," said Mademoiselle, "I always told you that he was real."

"I'll always believe everything you say after this," said Dorothea. "See him eat! Oh, get him to say something to us. I don't care what. Make him talk."

"He would n't say anything unless he and I were alone," said Mademoiselle, "he's shy about talking in company."

"Perhaps he'd rather we did n't even look at him," suggested Elna.

"I think that perhaps he would prefer that you hunted your eggs and had your breakfast."

They decided to eat breakfast before hunting the eggs as the chocolate would otherwise get cold. It

was almost impossible to find breakfast amidst the flowers and tied-up boxes and cages of toy rabbits and doves and chickens, but fortunately they had very little appetite and were easily satisfied with what they could pick out here and there.

Just as they finished Elise came to say that the whole village was waiting for the Easter Rabbit and that he really *must* go. So she huddled him up in her apron and carried him away. They soon found the eggs where he had hidden them, and then began the preparations for the woods — the crowning apex of the festivities.

The donkey and cart came to the door, and when the fact was known they all went down at once and the children got in and drove off. The mamma and Mademoiselle walked sedately behind.

There is one place in the Lichtenberger Wald that any rabbit would naturally choose to celebrate Easter — the egg-hunting part of Easter. A little cross valley runs between two knolls, and every tree on both sides has its roots all tied in knots around the *niciest* little holes. There are dead leaves and dead sticks to heap over the openings and it's easily perceived to be specially constructed with a view towards Easter celebrations.

At the foot of the ridge the two little girls unharnessed the donkey and tied him to a tree. The mamma and Mademoiselle perched themselves like a pair of Xerxes high up on the hillside and the

Easter battle for red, yellow, purple, and blue gain was waged madly all up and down and around them.

It took quite an hour and a half, for the Rabbit had been uncommonly clever at hiding his eggs. When the last goal was made and the last egg in, two tired and happy little girls pitched themselves down among the warm dry leaves and lay there till they were rested.

Then they went home to eat dinner and afterwards hide the eggs in the garden for the village children to hunt and find and keep.

That was fun, too, and put into the day the last and not the least sweet of its many joys.


Evening fell softly over the perfect Easter when it had finally gone to join all the other Easters that the world has ever known. The moon came out and rose slowly behind the long line of tree trunks. The Easter Rabbit came out, too, and sat quiet and alone to think about it all.

"I think that American child had a very nice German Easter," he said, nodding thoughtfully to himself.

And the American child thought so too.

TRADING HIS MOTHER

REX and his mother lived together in a large house covered with ivy. The curate said that one end of the house was Early English and that the other was distinctly James the First, a statement which Rex regarded as more than silly, since it was all alike of stone, and any one could see the stone whenever and wherever the wind blew the ivy aside. There was a tower at one end, and the curate said that the foundation of this tower was undoubtedly Norman. Rex coaxed Magda to take him down the dark way to see what the curate meant by "undoubtedly Norman," and a lizard ran out, and Magda dropped the candle, and screamed, and it was all dark and trying and awful. Rex never pardoned the curate for having been the one who had led him to embark in an enterprise that had terminated in tears and cries for Clemens to bring a light "wight off! wight off!" From that hour he transferred his partiality to Colonel Arkwright, who came out from the city twice a week in a "puff-puff," and always let the man who wore the leather eyeglasses take Rex and Magda to ride while he sat on the terrace and talked



to Rex's mother. Rex was fond of riding in the "puff-puff," and after a while the colonel developed other charms which made him glad that he had given him the *pas* over the curate. These charms consisted in wonderful toys, invariably hidden in the box under the back seat and invariably meant for Rex. There are certainly very few men with such a delicate intuition as to the pressing need of new toys as this friend of Rex's mother possessed, and it was only after several weeks of mechanical monkeys, tin regiments, and puzzle games that Rex's mother's son first discovered a wonder that the intuition was not omniscient.

"I should surely sink he would bring me a pony," he told Magda one morning, and, as Magda continued tating and unresponsive, he waited until he saw his mother, and then voiced his surprise to her.

She was dressing, and Nina was doing her hair, and a beautiful gown of muslin ruffles and pink rose embroidery lay spread out on the bed.

"Come here on my lap," said Rex's mother, to Nina's great distress, and she kissed him and hid her face in his tumble of curls, to Nina's utter despair. "You are too little for a pony," she said after a minute or so. "Ponies come when men are five years old."

"But I'm four," said Rex, "and four is less back of five."

"Yes," said his mother, and then the "puff-puff"

was heard in the avenue, and she put him from her quickly, and snatched up her rings from the dressing-table, and held her head straight for Nina, and was quite changed in all ways.

Rex stood and watched the muslin ruffles slipped into place and the black velvet tied round her little waist, and then, when she was done, he put his hand in hers, and they went down the stairs and out on the terrace together. The colonel was waiting there, and he smiled as he always did, and came, and stooped, and shook hands with Rex, and then took Rex's mother's hand and raised it to his lips; and Rex's mother's cheeks grew quite pink, and she said nothing; and Rex, standing by and watching, felt sure that the colonel took a long time to accomplish a very small thing, and as soon as he was through he went up to his mother, stood on tiptoe, pulled her down to his level, and gave the big man with the brown mustache an object lesson in how much better and more satisfactorily it may be done.

The mother laughed, and a curl which the caress had dislodged blew across her eyes as she did so. She put her pretty hands up to the curl and started to tuck it back among the other curls, and, as she did so, she looked at the visitor and said: "He loves me so — don't you?" (the last two words to Rex.)

Rex felt that this was no moment to prevaricate.

"Well, I would wahver have a pony," he said frankly.

At that the colonel began to laugh and his mother began to laugh, and after a minute he thought he must be in a good joke, even if he did n't just grasp it, and so he laughed, too.

"Would you trade your mamma for a pony?" the colonel asked him, picking him up and setting him on the edge of the great marble vase that held the flowers when they had dinner-parties on the terrace. "Do you mean what you say?"

"I want a pony wors' of all," Rex confessed.

"And we have worried," said the colonel to the mother, "we have tormented our brains and vexed our souls over a problem of such simple solving!" And then he put the small boy down again and told him to go and see if there was a package from London in the motor. Rex departed in haste, rejoicing over the certainty of the present and the possibility of the future. He found a long box in the motor, and inside the box was a tower and twelve mice. When the mice were set on the top of the tower, they ran all the way down to the bottom through a little circular passage, and then pitched into numbered holes. It was a game, and a very thrilling one, and Magda and the man in the leather spectacles (which he took off occasionally) chose mice, and played it with zest for fifteen minutes.

Afterward they took a ride down the avenue and past the lodge and round by Dougan's farm, and, when they came back, Rex went to bid his mother

good-night. And although the wind had died away, it had been so tempestuous first as to loosen three of her curls and drive her and her visitor into the library, where she was sitting in the corner of the big seat, and the colonel was standing in an aimless and unsettled manner, doing nothing in particular, by the window.

Rex climbed upon the seat and kissed his mother heartily. He threw back his head afterward and eyed the colonel proudly, because he felt somehow that he had been at a disadvantage there. And then he went to bed, and ever so much later the "puff-puff" woke him as it "puff-puffed" away to London.

All that week the house was very quiet, and on Friday the mamma and Nina went up to town and stayed two days. Then they came back, and Rex's aunt and his great-uncle and some others came, too, and the next day his grandmamma and her maid and her doctor and her funny, fuzzy black dog came, too, and the next day a great many more came, too, and the house was full of flowers, and the bishop was there to luncheon, and the curate. Only the curate looked so badly that Rex wondered if he had been seeking for something Norman and found a lizard.

The next morning Rex was awakened by music, and somewhere there was the most wonderful song being sung by voices that sounded just like birds. He went to the window to listen, and Magda was there listening, too. She was standing behind the

curtains, because she was in her nightgown, and the voices were filling the air — the air that was soft and pink because the sun was not yet risen, and the day was not yet old enough to be sure how he would like her and treat her.

"Where is zat moosic?" Rex asked Magda.

"They are on the tower," said Magda, whispering. "They are singing because it is the story that they shall sing on the tower whenever there is a bride in the house."

"And is there a bwide in our house?" Rex asked, whispering also.

"Yes," Magda told him, and kissed him.

After a little the song stopped, and they went back to bed, and slept later than usual — at least, Rex did. The next time that he awoke his mother was kissing him. She had her big blue-velvet coat thrown around her, and underneath she was all white, with little, pale-green ribbons tying little knots of lace. She had on white slippers that had buckles with green stones in them, and her hair was wonderfully lovely.

She kissed Rex over and over, and put a big, lovely picture of herself in a frame made of white daisies and blue forget-me-nots on the chimney-piece. But she said hardly a word.

After she went away Magda brought out a white suit with a white belt and a big gold belt-buckle, and told him to be a good boy, for they were all

going to church. It was not Sunday, but they were all going to church just the same, she explained, and then when he was dressed his grandmamma came in and looked him all over through her lorgnette and made him feel really very uncomfortable.

There was a great deal of noise in the court and up and down the avenue, and Magda told him he could go out on the balcony and look over, but, for the love of Heaven, not to lean against anything in that suit. His grandmamma was quite nervous, and told Magda that she would do better to hold him than to risk an accident, so Magda went out after him and held him.

There were ever so many carriages below, and his aunt in a black-lace dress, and all the other people in all sorts of dresses were down there, laughing and talking, and then getting in and driving away. All of a sudden Magda put him down, took his hand, and told him to hurry, and they almost ran through all the halls and out of the big door; and there was his grandmamma and her doctor in a carriage waiting for him and Magda to go to church with them.

So they drove away down the avenue, and past the lodge, and between the hedges that smelt so sweet because the may was all in bloom, and then they came to the church, which was gray and covered with ivy like their own house at home. There was a great crowd around the church, and they all bowed and curtsied and hummed and buzzed when

Rex's grandmamma and her doctor and her grandson and Magda got out of the carriage and went in under the little stone-roofed porch.

The church was quite different from usual and most beautifully trimmed with flowers, and every seat was full, and the organ was playing softly. Rex's grandmother took the arm of a gentleman who had come in another carriage, and the doctor took Rex's hand, and they went to their own pew with the carved door and the velvet cushions. Rex curled up in the corner and listened to the organ and smelled the flowers, and then suddenly he saw his grandmamma begin to fan herself very fast, and the doctor took the fan and fanned her instead, and the organ swelled louder, and Rex suddenly saw that something very lovely indeed in a white-lace dress and a large hat with a pale-green plume was almost in front of him, and that the bishop and the curate (the curate looking as if a whole cellar of lizards were after him) and the colonel were all there, too, standing close together.

Then for a little while it was really church, and everyone but Rex's grandmamma said their prayers, and the voices sang, and the organ played.

When the prayers were done, and the bishop had said a little more, the beautiful creature with the pale-green plume turned around and Rex saw that it was his mother. She looked up at him and his grandmamma and smiled sweetly. And then she

put her hand upon the colonel's arm, seeming to prefer him to the bishop or the curate, and walked down the aisle with him.

Rex's grandmamma rose at once, and the doctor rose, too. Rex rose also, and the gentleman who had led his grandmamma in stood there at the pew door ready to lead her out. No one else moved in their seats, and Rex could see all their faces smiling at him as he passed along between them.

When he came to the outside world he was quite startled and bewildered.

The bishop and the curate were both there, although how they had gotten there he could not see, and the crowd was ever so much bigger. They were very quiet, though, and he was not surprised at that, because his mother was standing before them looking so like an angel come straight out of a happy heaven down to a happy earth, that it was enough to make anyone stare only to look at her eyes and lips.

They all seemed waiting for him, and his mother bent, putting her hand up to steady her great hat as she did so, and kissed him. Just as she straightened up again he saw, with a gasp, something that he had not noticed before.

Perhaps it was because the carriage with the bouquets in the lamp-sockets and the great white rosettes by the horses' ears had overshadowed it completely; perhaps it was because the bishop and the curate and the colonel and the doctor had been

standing between it and him; perhaps it was because he, like the crowd, had been blinded to all else by the sight of the mother's joy and starry loveliness: but, at any rate, he saw now.

Before the carriage-step, taking precedence over that big carriage with its white bouquets and rosettes, were a pony and a cart — a black pony in a white leather harness, and a red-straw cart bearing small lamps and with a robe folded on the seat! A man was at the pony's head, and Magda was standing behind the cart.

Rex was speechless.

The colonel took his hand and led him up close to the wondrous equipage.

"Rex," he said, "you remember telling me the other day that you would rather have a pony than your mother? I really think that you would regret trading her outright at that figure, but I am willing to pay a pony for a fortnight of her society. Shall we call it a bargain?"

"Oh, yes," said Rex, and took possession that instant. His mother and the bishop were smiling very much indeed, and the crowd were cheering under their breaths. Magda took the place beside him, and the man who had been guarding the pony's head gave him the reins and shook out the robe over their knees.

Then the people began to cheer loudly, and then the pony began to walk and then to trot, and Rex,

turning his head for one beatific backward glance, saw the carriage moving up to the step, the people pouring out of the church, his grandmamma fanning violently, and his mother, with one hand on the colonel's arm, waving the other at him.

"Where shall we go?" he said to Magda, when the turn had hidden all from them.

"Let us go to my mother's," suggested Magda.

So they drove there, and Magda's mother was overjoyed to see them. If she had been expecting them she could not have been gladder or more ready. There were buns and milk on the table, and a new calf and four kittens (just pleasantly playful) to be looked at after the light refreshments.

Later they had a very nice luncheon, and just as they were finishing James came driving in and left some of the kind of cake that Rex had always been forbidden to eat,—a piece for each member of the family and a piece for the pony. Magda went down to the gate to talk with James for a moment, and when she came back after many, many moments, she found a small boy sound asleep. He slept nearly the whole afternoon, and when he woke there were more buns and more milk, and then they drove back home.

All the company was gone except Rex's grandmamma, and she was in bed and was to have her dinner in her own room. The house was odd and still and very different. Rex went all over it, and wondered at the flowers, which were everywhere.

Then he passed his mother's room; and the door was open, so he went in. It was all very odd and still, too, and his picture in the gold frame was gone. He remembered then that he had traded her for the pony, and an odd lump came up in his throat. It was a long while before he remembered that the colonel had said that it was only for a "forty"; he wondered what a "forty" was.

Just then Magda came in. She had been hunting for him everywhere, she said. He went for his bath and to be put to bed.

"What is a forty?" he asked, as he climbed in among his pillows half an hour later.

"You can count up to ten," said Magda; "well, four tens are forty."

He stretched out to think it over, and the greatness of the proposition wearied him quickly to sleep.

The next morning the consolation of the pony was again on hand. Rex went to the stable, and looked at it, and hugged its nose, and smoothed its mane. After all, a pony was not a bad substitute for a mother. He drove out with Magda again, and the triumph of the feat so elated him that when he came home and found his grandmother drying her eyes over a telegram from his mother in Paris, he pitied her contemptuously for her weakness. The fuzzy dog was sniffing his bare legs in an unpleasantly familiar way just then, so he left his grandmother and went back to the pony.

The next day his grandmother was in bed all day, and life was all pony and no family affection whatever.

The next day grandmother, maid, fuzzy dog, and doctor all departed together, and the curate came over with his little black trunk and settled himself in the room in the Early English tower.

Rex was very depressed. He was courageous, but the lump in his throat was becoming a permanent fixture of nights. The pony looked so little and fat and sleepy always, and that white, slender mother with the starry eyes stood out in his dreams like a vision, the reality of which seemed too good ever to have been true.

The curate was learning to play the flute. He played the flute in a most dismal and wailing manner, and although Rex was young, he had ears, and, worse still, nerves. The days passed heavily by — days and days and days. Four tens make forty. Oh, what an awful sum!

Finally one morning Magda said, as she brushed out his curls with more than her usual vigor:

“To think that it’s only a fortnight to-day!”

“A fortnight?” Rex asked. “What’s that?”

“Two weeks,” said Magda; “it’s two weeks to-day since your mamma went away. You are going to have a present to-day.”

Rex looked unhappy.

“I don’t want a present,” he said; “I want my mamma.”

At the words, the big tears welled up in his eyes and rolled down his cheeks.

Magda snatched him up and hugged and kissed him.

"You darling!" she said. "I hear the wheels now!"

It was quite true. There were wheels sweeping up the avenue. Rex burst out of Magda's arms and ran as fast as he could through the gallery, down the staircase, and out on the gravel. The carriage was just stopping, and his mother was leaning forward and looking out of the window. She had on a tiny blue hat and a blue veil, and she was putting the veil up, even as she looked out, quite as if she were making ready to be kissed again after her long absence from such pleasure.

The colonel alighted first, and the instant after Rex was hanging about his mother's neck.

And then without a word he broke from her, and ran for dear life off around the corner by the sun-dial.

The mother looked a bit startled, and then she laughed and went into the house, and the colonel followed her.

It was quite fifteen minutes before Rex returned.

He came into the morning-room then, and saw his mother sitting there, still with her little blue hat on. She was drinking coffee and eating toast and strawberries. The colonel was sitting beside her, instead

of where his place was laid, opposite, and in his hand was a great package of unopened letters.

"I want you," said Rex, going straight up to him and seizing his hand, "I want you."

"It runs in the family, you see," Rex's mother cried, laughing; "it descends from generation to generation."

The colonel took Rex's little hand gently into his.

"What is it that you want with me, my boy?" he asked.

"I want you to come wiv me — wight now this minute," said Rex.

The colonel rose; the mother rose, too. Rex led his captive out upon the terrace; the mother followed. All three went to the rail of the balustrade together.

"There," said Rex, pointing.

Below was the pony, led by James.

"Yes," said the colonel; "I see."

"You can have him back," said Rex, his cheeks brightly scarlet. "I want you to have him back, — an' I'll take my muvver back, too."

His eyes were fairly blazing with terrible anxiety and longing as he looked up into the face above him.

"She is n't your muvver," he said, in desperate pleading; "she's my muvver, an' I want her back."

The colonel was silent.

"People can't have but one muvver," said the boy,

"when a man takes a muvver from somebody, a pony don't help somebody. A pony is n't ever there when it's dark. Please take the pony, and let me have my muvver."

The mother came step by step closer until her hand was on Rex's curls and her head was very near the colonel's bosom.

"Rex," said the colonel in a very curiously low voice, "don't you like having me about — as a — as a friend? Have n't I always behaved well and lent you my car whenever you cared to use it?"

"Yes," said Rex, and his countenance expressed a painful conflict; "I do sink you are nice."

"Then suppose," said the colonel, "that I wanted to stay and live here —"

"Oh," said the boy sharply, swallowing a sob.

The colonel looked earnestly at him.

"I'll be very good, Rex," he said appealingly; "there must be some one here to take care of you all. I won't ask to have your mother for my mother; in fact, I have a mother of my own whom I love very dearly and whom — as a mother — I really prefer to yours. Won't you allow the pony to stay in the stable as yours, and allow me to stay in the house as — as your mother's?"

Rex looked up at his mother.

"Do you want him?" he asked her.

She nodded, smiling. Rex considered.

"If we did n't have him to take care of us, would

we have to have Mr. Beck, maybe?" he asked at last.

Mr. Beck was the curate.

"Certainly," said the colonel; "it has always been a choice between Mr. Beck or myself. Which do you choose?"

"I choose you," said Rex.

There was a minute of silence. The colonel looked at Rex's mother and Rex's mother smiled; then the colonel looked at Rex and Rex smiled too.

And then the latter turned and walked to the end of the terrace.

"James," he called loudly and clearly, "you may take the pony back to the stables. I have shanged my mind."

THE VERY BOTTOM OF HER PURSE

OF course Arline's family thought that she knew more than she did, or they never would have trusted her to take Betty and go so far away so all alone. To be sure, there were no very near or dear ones to have taught her certain elementary facts in life, but there were uncles and aunts who thought some one else must have surely done so, and a guardian who gave no thought to anything, but supposed, as a matter of course, that everybody in the world who had money knew all there was to know about it. Under such circumstances, it was considered quite safe and proper and charming and cheerful that Arline, who was seven-and-twenty, should take Betty, who was seven, and trusting, and go across the water to live indefinitely.

So they went.

It was about eight months later that the trouble came, and it was terrible enough when it did come. For there is no trouble more difficult to deal with than that which befell poor Arline and Betty.

It was a June evening, and the June roses were blooming on the Thousand Year Rose-bush in the garden below, and even on Betty's cheeks as they nestled in the lace on her mother's gown while the evening prayer was said.

"Lieber Gott, mach mich fromm dass ich zu dir in Himmel komm." Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. *Que le bon Dieu nous bénisse* — so it was that the cosmopolitan Betty habitually terminated her day.

"Now kiss me, my baby," said the mother, when she had done, and the little one turned her sweet lips upward and the kiss was fondly given and received.

"Good night, darling."

"Good night, mamma. Are you going to play the piano?"

"Not to-night, dear."

"You won't write and get tired for my picnic to-morrow?"

"No, surely not."

Betty turned her face into her pillow with a sigh of utter content, and Arline went into the next room and sat down by the window.

There were no roses on *her* cheeks; nothing but a sort of pale shadow — the shadow that grows during sleepless nights. She clasped her hands in her lap and gazed out at the boulevard and the wander-

ing crowd of evening promenaders with unseeing eyes, and then, after awhile, she rose and went to her desk, took out her purse, opened it, and looked thoughtfully at the twenty-mark gold piece within. How little and lonely and helpless and hapless that one small bit of money did appear! And it was all that she had in the world.

For a while she stared at the coin, and then she laid the purse gently down and went back to the window. It is so curious to be very, very far away from home, and to have no money. No money. No money. She murmured the two words over and over to herself. And there was Betty in the other room, too. This was Monday. The board was paid until Thursday, and the governess till next Monday, and then what? She sat down and thought.

"It is nine weeks since I wrote. If there was any money there they would surely have sent it before now. The letter could n't have been lost, for I registered it, and letters of credit cannot be lost, either. They must have failed. If they have failed I have n't a cent in the world. And Betty! And Betty!"

It was the hundredth — the thousandth — yes, the ten thousandth time that she had said those same words to herself during the past three weeks. At first slowly and altogether unbelieving; then with wondering fear; then faster and faster, more fearfully and more fearfully. Until now they had gone through her brain like the water in a mill-race and

given her no peace by day or night. Poverty had threatened, and now poverty had come. The bottom of her purse had been *there* then; now it was *here*.

The maid came up with the evening's mail, and interrupted her silence with the knock that always made hope flame up so fiercely. But the instant after hope sank down again, for there was no communication from the London bankers.

So she went to bed, and somewhere between then and dawn a few stray dream-fairies closed her tired, frightened eyes for a few stray minutes — a very few, but those few sadly needed.

With the morning Betty woke and, seeing the sunshine, cried out with joy over the splendid promise of her picnic.

"I want two horses to my carriage," she said, throwing her arms around the neck of her white-faced mother. "I don't want to go in a cab."

Arline smiled. She was good at smiling, and the smile was brave and sweet, for she was as good at being brave and sweet as she was at smiling.

"You shall have two horses, pet," she said, and took the purse with its gold piece and went out, accompanied by the gaily hopping Betty, to order the two-horse carriage.

It would cost seven marks.

"Is that much?" Betty asked as they left the stable.

"A good deal," smiled her mother, looking up at

THE BOTTOM OF HER PURSE 237

the blue sky and wondering if the dear God was really behind the clouds, and, if so, if He was giving any special thought to Betty just then.

They went next to invite two or three friends to share the splendor of the two horses with them, and also to order the cakes. It is a curious fact that in small German towns, when you drive out to a restaurant for tea, the proprietor is not at all offended at your bringing your own refreshments with you. Indeed, the cakes are so invariably brought, that he is surprised if anyone expects to buy them of him.

When they returned to the house there was only one letter waiting there, and it was not from the bank. It was from a man whose picture hung in their sitting-room upstairs — a man with heavy eyebrows, and a cigarette in his hand. Betty had seen him twice in her life, but she remembered him mainly through the medium of her doll, which he had given to her in Paris and christened Arlette, in spite of her desire to name it for her mother. I am afraid that there had been other visits when Betty was in bed and asleep; also when Betty was in Germany, and her mother in England; at any rate, there had been something which altered Arline's expression and caused her to suggest the cat and the garden, to the end that she might be alone to read the letter.

Betty accepted the suggestion, and her mother

went upstairs to their bedroom and threw herself upon the couch and read:

It strikes me as such utter rot. I get more out of patience whenever I think of it. You don't belong there alone, and you don't know enough to take care of yourself, not to speak of Betty. You know where you do belong — you belong on my knee. I've told you so a dozen times, but you never will allow me to prove it to you. If you'd just let me take hold of you once and set you there, and take all your bothers and troubles and throw them behind you, or behind me, or behind us—I particularly suggest "behind us"—you'd be perfectly reconciled to the situation forever after. You don't know how eminently right it would feel to have my arm around your waist. You think it wouldn't do, but if you'd just try it! It's such a beastly shame that you won't. It makes me mad clear through whenever I think of it. I try not to think of it, and then I think of it more than ever.

Do you know that you are ruining my disposition? I am becoming morose. Another six months and I shall be out of all running socially. I merely growl when I don't want what they pass me at dinner-parties now. I should think you would feel badly over wrecking such a popular fellow as I used to be. I feel terribly over being wrecked, I assure you. And I was so happy, too, up to that day of the Grand Prix.

Lester wants me to go yachting with him, and I half want to go, because it was he who introduced us, and I half want to plunge overboard when I get there because he did introduce us. If I do plunge overboard and you read about it in the *Paris Herald*, will you feel bad, I wonder? Remburne wants me to go out to

India with him, too. Tiger-hunting or some such beastly (pardon me — it was n't meant) racket. Perhaps I'll go. But I'm so uncertain.

I keep thinking that perhaps you'll break your neck, or that some misfortune will break your spirit, or that some kind fate will bring you to your knees — no, my knees — some way, and, of course, in such a case I want the knees to be nearer than India.

Do you know what I did the other night? The bishop had me down there for Sunday, and after service he took me around to his hospital and showed me all they'd done this year. Of course I gave him a check, because I always pay my board wherever I go, and as it was rather a big one he was much pleased, and confided to me how he was planning to build a new wing for crippled children on the garden side, and how he had money enough to break ground for it this coming autumn. Well, when he was done, and they all had gone up to get ready for the next thing, I went back to the church alone, went to the pew where I sat by you that one service, and took a vow that if misfortune — just a small, agreeable, but especially urgent misfortune — might come upon you and so overwhelm you that you would *have* to turn to me, I would build the whole thing myself and thank God every day of my life into the bargain. And I'll do it, too. If only the Fates will be bad to you and good to me! But you are so frightfully independent, so abominably stiff-necked, so atrociously unreasonable. I do really think you are the most trying woman I ever met — also the sweetest and most lovable. Heavens, if you only guessed how much I want you, or how good I'd be to you! But it's no use telling you anything. You'll keep on living in that hole of a place, doing no good to anyone, just as

any thin, homely, tame creature might live, and I — oh, I'll go to India and drown myself in tigers! Yes, I will. Good-bye.

Arline, finishing, shut her eyes and sat still, thinking.

"I suppose it would be very nice for the poor little crippled children," she said at last slowly, and then she went in and locked up the letter in her tin box, and looked rather shamefacedly at the picture hanging on the wall.

Betty's picnic that afternoon was a great success, and they drove to Hildesia and plunged into such excesses there that Arline brought home one mark and ten pfennigs — almost thirty cents — and she knew that her end was close at hand.

When Betty was in bed she sat down by the window again and thought a long while. One does n't like to sell oneself to a man whom one has known only eight months, even if he did propose the third day and has kept right on ever since. But when the man has always had a sort of effect that makes one's heart beat even to think of — and when his eyes are different from all the other eyes in the world — and when it will help crippled children — and when there is n't any money unless — and when there is Betty — and when he went into the church and prayed like that —

She took up her pen at last and wrote:

THE BOTTOM OF HER PURSE 241

I have your letter, and although I wish you had n't prayed for me to have misfortune, still it has come, and I guess the poor sick children will get their building.

I wrote for a new letter of credit nine weeks ago, and I registered the letter, so it could n't have been lost, but they must have failed, for it has never come, and Betty and I have only a mark left to-night. You can see that I have got to marry you. It is awful to have to do it this way, but if you don't mind, and will telegraph me ten pounds right off, I won't mind either. If you don't want to, or if you have gone yachting, I must do something with my diamonds. I don't at all know what to do or how to do it, but it's what people abroad always have to do, and I know I can find out.

I do love you, you know, only you did frighten me so that time you kissed me, and I hope you'll never do it so quick again. I don't like the way you order me about, either, but if you'll only send the ten pounds quick, I'll try not to mind, and it will always be lovely to think of the poor little crippled children.

Yours from now on (if you want me).

ARLINE.

She folded it and sealed it and enclosed it in one to the bankers, begging them to forward it at once, and if the gentleman had left London, to please let her know at such and such an address by return mail.

And then she went herself and posted it.

The next morning the post brought an American wedding invitation, which was, of course, overweight, and took forty pfennigs out of the pitiful

little purse. There was no other mail until noon, when a postal arrived from Scotland, with something written on the face side, where you may write for the same country but not for any foreign country; so Arline paid twenty-five pfennigs for the information that a traveling friend had arrived safely and found rainy weather.

Now she had forty-five pfennigs left.

In the afternoon there came a circular in which the wrapper stuck to the enclosure, thus making it a sealed parcel, and she paid forty pfennigs on that.

Leaving five pfennigs in the purse.

"Are you sick, dear mamma?" said Betty, coming in from her walk with a big bunch of wild flowers.

"No," said Arline, with her brave smile, "only rather tired."

"Can I have some money for some cakes?"

There was a pause. The dear little face looking earnestly at her mamma's saw a strange helplessness there that was unfathomable.

Arline's heart was shutting and opening in a pain that made her speechless. *If* he was gone to the North Sea! *If* no one would give her any money for her diamonds!

Betty turned and ran into the other room.

"What are you doing?" Arline cried then, finding speech in her fear that she had frightened the child to tears.

"I'm opening my cat!" Betty cried. She did n't refer to the cat in the garden, but to a tin cat, hitherto held sacred and regarded in the light of a savings bank. The next moment Betty was back, pouring the contents of the cat into her mother's lap.

"I suppose you've forgett'd to go to your bank," she explained, with a little laugh, "so you'll have to take mine."

The great tears welled up in her mother's eyes.

"That I should have brought her to this!" she thought. "Oh, my God in heaven! If he *has* gone to the North Sea, or to India!"

Betty kissed her. "Don't mind taking it, mamma," she said tenderly. "I don't cry when you give *me* money. I just say 'Thank you.' " And then she kissed her mother again and ran away.

That night Arline did not sleep at all. The letter must have reached London, she knew, but when would the answer reach her? And if he had gone to the North Sea or to India? All the next morning she lay on her bed quite ill with miserable anxiety.

"I don't ever want to be independent again," she thought, with choking sobs. "Oh, dear! If he prayed for misfortune to come to me, he ought to have stayed near to help when it did come."

Betty was out with the governess. Downstairs

Freda was flirting with the butcher's boy so vigorously that you could hear them two flights above.

Then the bell rang. Arline's heart came violently up in her throat. Somehow she knew that it was her doom that had arrived in some shape.

Freda came up presently with the telegram. Her cap was awry and she looked flushed, but Arline had no eyes for anything but that folded bit of paper. At any rate, there was nothing to pay on it.

She broke the seal with trembling fingers. She could hardly see to read at first — the words danced and dazzled so oddly — and then it was all plain.

So glad you have gone sane at last. Am telegraphing fifty pounds. Wish it were myself. Am taking the noon boat. Can't you come to Hanover and be there to eat breakfast with me when I get in? You must.

She sank back on her pillow. Oh, the infinite, blessed relief of it all!

She rang for the lady of the house. "I wish you'd lend me forty marks, *fräulein*," she said, smiling. "I want to go to Hanover this afternoon, and I don't want to fuss with going to the bank until I come back to-morrow."

Fräulein at once brought her the forty marks, and when Betty came in she was presented with five at once.

"You can get what you like," Arline said, kissing

her gaily. "I'm going to go to visit the Tante Majorin to-night, and when I come back you can show me what you've bought with your money."

The money order came just after lunch. The sun was shining outdoors, and the swallows were whirling in the sky. Oh, but life was a beautiful thing! And there were the little sick children who would owe so much to her. And there was everything! There was even that big man — oh!

Arline slipped into her traveling suit and pongee coat and departed, and the next morning, when she returned, the man who had given Betty the doll came back with her.

Betty was surprised and delighted to see him again. She remembered him very well indeed, only she had not known that he was anywhere in the neighborhood just then. And he had brought her a ring — almost exactly like her mamma's new one.

"Did you give that one to mamma, too?" she asked, comparing them.

"Yes," said the man, "I did. I'm a very generous fellow."

Arline went upstairs to lay her hat aside, and when she went into the little parlor she saw a number of letters there, one from the bankers in London.

The man and Betty, coming up to see why she did not return, found her staring at it as if petrified.

"What *is* the trouble now?" the man asked, with an anxious note in his voice.

Arline gave him the letter, and he read :

DEAR MADAM: We have forwarded the letter as per request, and beg to state that the gentleman is still in London.

We also wish to inform you that a letter of credit for one thousand pounds, made out in your name, was received by us on the sixteenth of last month, but as you told us to hold same until you sent your new address we have adhered to your order. Please notify us when you wish same forwarded.

Very respectfully,
BLANK, BLANK & Co.

The man threw back his head and roared.

Arline was looking so very curiously, oddly pink.

And then, to Betty's great astonishment, the man seized her mother in his arms and kissed her violently, while she cried out about her hair, about her comb, and something vague about Betty herself.

"I only prayed for an agreeable little misfortune," he laughed, "and surely I had my prayer most literally answered. You can't back out now, you know, you can't back out now."

"I don't — want to — back out," panted Arline, trying to get one hand to her head; "but oh! — oh, please promise me never, never to tell them at home!"

"I shall tell anyone I want to," declared the man. "You don't belong to yourself any more — you belong to me. Does n't she, Betty?"

"No, she belongs to me," said Betty.

"Not at all," said the man; "she belongs to me,

and you do, too — from now on. Don't forget that, puss."

And somehow Betty was pleased, and liked him in spite of his contradicting her. For Betty was feminine, too — like her mother.

THE STEINHARD PRIDE

ALONG through the black depths of the pine forest there came a robber troop. In their midst, bound on his horse with ropes so tightly drawn that they cut his flesh in places, rode a prisoner. Across his saddle-bow was slung the body of a boy of ten years, apparently dead. There was blood on the man, blood on the horse, blood on the boy. Miles behind there smouldered a scene of waste and ruin. Amidst the ashes that strewed that desecrated ground lay the corpse of a blond-haired woman, the tiny form of a blond-haired baby. Whither the horse was bearing him or to what shame and pain he and that faintly gasping child on his knees were destined by their hideous escort, the prisoner had no means of knowing. His agony of body and mind was well nigh limitless.

Yet he looked straight before him, and his large blue eyes neither flinched nor wavered.

There was that within him which no enemy might bend or break. Indomitable. Invincible. As hard as a stone. When the wheel of Fate had turned

again, the man was free. The wounded child recovered and grew to manhood. On the mountain-side he built his home and men of the race that had slain his mother toiled up the heights with the rocks that should make it impregnable. There came a day when he stood in the watch-turret of his keep and looked over all that was his own again, and knew himself secure in Right and Might. He was still a young man, and the priest at his side looked into his face to see the flash of joy — the revelation of conquest. But Count Steinhard's eyes were as large and blue and still as his father's had been when he rode through the Tannenwald a prisoner, bound — perhaps to be scourged 'ere sunset; what he felt he refused to show to the priest; what they felt — "they" being all his race from that day a thousand years ago down to this day on the calendar — they always refused to show. What moved their hearts and souls was counted too good for the parade or the scaffold, too sacred for the eyes of the populace. They went into exile unmoved; or sat at the king's right hand. They were racked — and decorated — in the same spirit of proud immobility. Towards the end of their family history the men of the race died out. At last there was only the old count and his son, the young lieutenant. The lieutenant being quartered at Kiel fell desperately in love and broke every tie of birth, breeding, and loyalty — every tradition of his race — to attain one object. He

left his country, a deserter, and married the girl he loved in a land so far away that neither law nor loyalty could cross his will. Count Steinhard, living alone at Schloss Eisfels in the Harz, accepted this end to all his hopes as calmly and as quietly as his line accepted all things. His dear friend, the great Dr. Kircholtz, came to hunt with him the month after and found him as good company as ever. The young lieutenant was the same as dead to his father, for he could never return to his country of course — but the father referred to him neither more nor less than he ever had. A few months later came the news that the young man was really dead. It was the open season for deer, and Dr. Kircholtz was again at Eisfels. They went out in the forest the morning after the coming of the telegram and the count brought down a splendid buck with his first shot. The huntsman ran forward and threw the creature's head far back for the death-stroke. The count made a movement of dissent, and turned abruptly away into the pine shadows. Dr. Kircholtz followed him and in a minute the count halted for his friend to come up with him.

"Heinrich," he said then, walking slowly but neither bent nor bowed, "I had a letter from the boy a few weeks since, and he wrote me that there was to be a child. I want you to see that that child and its mother are well provided for. I will sign all necessary documents. But I do

not want to hear or know anything further. Remember."

Dr. Kircholtz, who was himself the grandfather of two tots in favor of whom their mother had cheerfully abdicated the throne in her father's heart, pulled his green felt hat well over his eyes and assented with a gruff monosyllable.

They shot three other deer in the course of the morning but held very little conversation together. The count shot remarkably well and his hand was quite steady. And his eyes looked straight ahead, big, blue, and unwavering.

Every arrangement had been made and the teacher had explained to the children. Nevertheless her coming created much physical and mental commotion. A maid brought her the first time, and opened the door, and put her in among them, and then shut the door again. She stood perfectly still and stared straight ahead. Her eyes were big and blue and her mouth was almost babyish, her hair was a brushed-out fluff of soft yellow, and her dress was dark with a pink bow under her pink chin. Her little delicate hands were clasped in front of her. She was perhaps seven years old. And she stood still there by the door and stared.

The teacher rose and went to her.

"Come, Charlotte," she said in English, "I will

show you where your seat is. We were expecting you."

The child followed her obediently and sat down before the desk which bore two new copybooks. The teacher put her hand gently on the soft little yellow head.

"You can copy the letters," she said, "and you can listen to the other children recite their lessons. You will soon begin to understand."

"Yes," said the child, so softly that only the "s" was audible, and then she folded her little hands upon her desk and her eyes began to travel slowly and thoughtfully over the schoolroom. The schoolroom's eyes were all on her and the little girls were all humming and bubbling over with curiosity, but she paid no attention. Her big, unseeing look traversed all the human interest about her, flowed over the sunshine in the window's hold, over the teacher and her desk, over everything. She had never been among strangers before in her life, she had never been in a schoolroom before, and she knew that no one but the teacher could speak to her or understand her. There was a lump in her throat that no one would ever know of, an old ache in her baby heart that this strange scene made harder than ever before to bear, — but she revealed nothing. Her blue eyes were calm and unwavering; when they had stared ahead for a long time they dropped their gaze to her desk and the two copy-

books that lay there. She took up the pen and dipped it in the ink and wrote her name in big, plain letters on the outside of each book. There it stood for all to read.

“Charlotte von Steinhard.”

At the recess hour the children swarmed about her. She was so small and “niedlich.” They lifted her curls with inquisitive fingers, and the older ones asked her in English “how she did, good morning, this is a fine day.” She smiled then and showed pretty little white teeth, and then they taught her how they played ball, and then the bell rang and school began again.

When it was over the teacher approached the baby and asked her how her mamma was. The child looked up with her big, blue earnestness, “She is in bed,” she said, “she ’s always in bed.”

“Her mamma is very ill,” said the teacher in German to the others, “she has no brothers or sisters, — you must all be gentle and kind to her.”

“Gentle and kind to her!” Heavens, as if the recommendation were necessary. They could hardly give the little thing space to move and breathe. They hung about her, over her, before her, smoothed her dress, her hair, her pink bow, — escorted her home in one solid phalanx of amateur Amazonianism. The teacher was obliged to make special rules entirely for the comfort of Charlotte and to enforce

them strictly the next day, and even then there was such a pressure to sit by her that an apron-riot was imminent.

"How is your mamma to-day?" the teacher asked the child when recess came the third day.

"My mamma is pretty well, thank you," said the child.

"Is she sitting up?"

The blue eyes wondered visibly.

"My mamma never sits up," said the child, "she is always in bed."

The teacher hesitated.

"Will you tell her that I am coming to see her," she said presently.

"Yes," said the baby in her little whisper.

So the next afternoon the teacher went to make the call. She found a lovely bright room with pictures and flowers in the windows. There was a little bed and a big bed and in the big bed was a little mamma, with brown hair, and sweet brown eyes, and two delicate hands very like the hands that rested clasped on Charlotte's desk so often.

"It is so kind of you to come," said the mamma — "I am so grateful to you."

The teacher felt quite startled and dumb.

"You are so kind to my baby," said the mamma, "poor mite; it is so hard for her not understanding German. But she will soon learn, I think — don't you?"

"Yes," said the teacher. Her tongue clove curiously to the roof of her mouth and her "yes" was little better than Charlotte's own.

"She is so good, the wee thing," said the mamma; "you would not think so little a girl could be so thoughtful — so careful. You must not think because she is so quiet that she is unobserving. Her manner is her nature."

"Where is she now?" asked the teacher.

"She is out walking. She would never leave me if I allowed her to stay. Poor darling."

Something made the teacher suddenly lay her hand on those thin white hands clasped so tightly together.

The mother drew a long, painful breath.

"I want to live," she said slowly, closing her eyes as she spoke, "it seems as if I *must* live. She — she is so very little yet."

The teacher went home later, and on her heart was pressing a horrible weight. The next morning in school the sight of the little one sitting there motionless, listening to the recitations of which she did not understand one word, made the weight worse. Patience aged seven years, and fortitude crowned with little yellow curls are apt to be heart-rending. The fact that Charlotte had learned to play ball and skip rope in German did not dim her pathos at all.

The second and third week passed. The teacher

had called on the mother again and found the little one perched on the bedside holding the thin white hands in her own tiny ones. It was not a very lively call and the teacher went home, and having no thousand years of pride to back her up, simply sat down and cried.

The second morning after, Charlotte was delivered at school as usual and went to her desk. She looked very strange indeed, fixed her eyes on the big map, and never moved until recess. The teacher reminded her of her writing twice but she did not seem to hear. The children eyed her from time to time but did not speak to her or touch her. There was something quite stony and awe-provoking in her silence, but as soon as the rest had gone out the teacher hurried to her side.

"What is the matter, Charlotte?" she asked.

But Charlotte was dumb.

"How is your mamma, my dear?"

"My mamma is gone away," said the child.

Then the teacher was dumb.

"She was gone when I came home from school yesterday," continued the little one; "she did n't come back last night either."

Her tone was quite calm — her blue eyes were quite dry. She held her hands tight fast in one another and stared straight ahead. The teacher was woefully beset to know what to do or to say.

"Do you want to go home?" she asked at last.

Charlotte shook her head. "There is n't anyone there for me to take care of now," she said.

"Won't you run out and play?"

Charlotte shook her head again.

So the teacher left her there and went out to tell the children and when she had finished telling them she went back and found the yellow head on the desk. Charlotte was asleep.

Then something very sweet and pretty came to pass. The little girls slipped off their shoes and stole in like mice and brought out all their books, and the teacher gathered them about her out under the trees and taught them there while the baby forgot her sorrow in sleep in the schoolroom.

In the days that followed, the sympathy that surrounded Charlotte was so vigorous that new rules were again necessary. It was absolutely forbidden that she should be kissed or squeezed, or that candy should be put in her mouth by force. And the poor teacher was continually terrified on account of the Damocles sword which hung overhead and at her wits' end with trying to teach in the face of that silent, stoically-heroic little figure.

Then at last came the telegram.

Charlotte was to be brought forthwith to Berlin by somebody. Nobody was specified, and so the teacher found a substitute to teach for her and took the little one herself.

The journey was long but the baby was very good.

"I shall see my mamma again," she remarked occasionally; and the weeks in school had wrought the wonder that the remark was made in German instead of in English.

The teacher nodded. Not being of any special fortitude by nature she was on the verge of sobs.

They arrived towards night and were met by a tall man in livery who put them into a carriage and took them on a long drive into the country.

There was an old gentleman who came to them at once and spoke to them in German. He turned Charlotte's pink chin up with his hand and said in a very low but kind tone:

"I believe this is a very good little girl; I believe that this is a little girl who knows how ill her dear mamma is and who will not do or say anything to make her mamma worse. Is that not so?"

"Yes," said Charlotte in her little whisper.

Then the gentleman took her small hand and led her upstairs and through many halls until they came at last to a door numbered 204.

Here they paused, and in a minute the door opened softly and someone stepped aside to let the child come into the room.

It was a white room with a white bed and the little mamma lay there looking very white, too. The baby crossed the room on tiptoe and stood by the bed and the mother opened her eyes and saw her.

Neither spoke; they both smiled, and then the child leaned over and kissed her mother.

"Don't take her away again," said the mother after a minute.

"She is going to stay in Dr. Kircholtz's villa," said the nurse who was standing by the foot of the bed.

"Shall I tuck up your sides?" asked Charlotte, solicitously, "or shall I get you a hot water bottle anywhere?"

The mamma smiled.

"Or shall I leave you to sleep?" asked the baby. (Oh, there was heroism in those words, the long weeks of mother-hunger considered!)

The mamma smiled again.

"When she just smiles," said Charlotte to the nurse, "it means she's too tired to talk and please just put down the curtains and let her sleep."

"That is quite true," said the nurse.

"God bless you every minute till I come back," said the little one, softly kissing her mother's hand, and then she went out into the corridor where the old gentleman was strolling back and forth.

"Are you very tired, Charlotte?" he asked, taking her hand in his again; "you must tell me the truth."

"It rested me to see my mamma again," said Charlotte, simply.

"I want to drive to the station and meet a friend," said the old gentleman, "if you are not too tired I

should like to take you with me. I think the kind lady who brought you will allow it."

Charlotte was quite ready to go to the station and the teacher said she had slept sufficiently during the journey to be permitted to do so.

"My friend is an old gentleman, too," said the old gentleman, when they were in the carriage. "I call him Adelbert, but it will be best for you not to call him anything — as yet. You must speak German to him for he does not understand English."

"Yes," said the child.

They had to walk up and down the platform and wait five or ten minutes for the train.

"He is quite a tall old gentleman," said Charlotte's companion; "he is not bearded like myself — he has a big gray mustache. You will know him at once because of the way he stares straight ahead, — he does that quite as you do — in many ways he is quite like you."

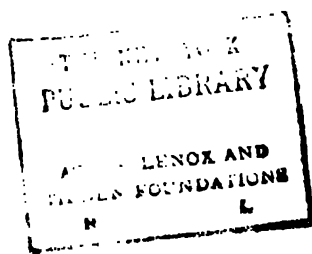
"Yes," whispered Charlotte.

Then the train rushed in and ever so many people hurried out of it and ever so many others hurried onto it and it puffed away and the crowd came streaming through the gates. Among them was a tall, straight old man with a high hat and a long gray coat. His eyes were very quiet and set as he walked directly towards the carriage.

"Adelbert," said the old gentleman who had brought Charlotte there.



"The doctor picked the baby up and put her straight into her grandfather's arms." *Page 261*



The stranger stopped.

"Heinrich," he said, — "this is truly good of you." They shook hands. The little girl looked earnestly at them. And the newcomer looked down at her and suddenly knit his brows, — the doctor stooped then, picked the baby up and put her straight into her grandfather's arms.

"Adelbert," he said, "pride is a fine thing and the Steinhart pride has made many heroes, but never one more worthy the name and blood than this one. Don't give her back to me — keep her."

Count Steinhart stood as if turned to stone. He looked at Charlotte and Charlotte looked at him. Neither gaze wavered.

"Is she alone in this world?" he asked at last.

"No, thank God," said the doctor, "her mother will live, and this summer she will live at Schloss Eisfels." (It must be admitted that Dr. Kircholtz was something of a hero himself in this hour.)

The Count went slowly to the carriage, still holding Charlotte on his arm. Nothing could be read in his face, but his arm was hard pressed around the child.

"Does she know who I am?" he asked after a while.

"Do you know?" the doctor asked.

The child shook her head.

"You know how you love your mamma?"

Charlotte nodded.

"Well, all that your mamma is to you this man was to your papa."

Charlotte turned her eyes up to the face above her. There was wonder and understanding in her look. But the face above her was curiously shaded and softened.

"Oh, Heinrich, Heinrich," murmured the count, "God grant I atone for it all to them both."

And he bowed his face on the golden curls, and felt the Steinhard pride come to its end at last.

THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOG

PRINCE was not of the blood-royal, although his father was "Emperor" and his gentle, soft-eyed mother was "Queen." He had a pedigree but it only ran back to "Atheling Arthur," and English history tells of no such man as ever wearing the crown. King Arthur was not an Atheling, — the Athelings were all Edmunds or Edwards, and so I may say at once what I think that you have already guessed, and that is that Prince was a dog. He was a dog and a splendid dog — a big red Irish setter with brown eyes, silky ears, and a coat so smoothly, softly curled that to start one's hand at his head and let it gently follow its way along to the end of his plummy tail was a real joy. He loved to be so petted and used to whine very low when Bessie caressed him thus, and when Bessie's grandpapa, his beloved master, was reading and forgot to replace his hand on the dog's head after taking it away to turn a page, the same little whine would remind the hand to come back to the place and when it had so come Prince would turn his head, and, resting his jaw upon the knee against which he leaned, would gaze upward with

eyes whose brown affection shot pure gold in its speechless content.

Bessie's grandpapa was very fond of sitting before his fire like that, and reading with Prince at his knee, and Prince was fond of it, too. Long hours he rested quiet there, absorbed in his own meditations until when his master had finished reading he received the closing of the book as a signal to start away and stand a little distance off waiting, much interested to see what was going to be done next. If Bessie's grandpapa went to his couch for a nap Prince went out and down the narrow stair-case into the garden for a good run in the sunshine, but if Grandpa-Master went to the closet to fetch his hat and stick, Prince knew that they were going to walk together, and in that case he rushed wildly off for Bessie, — for Bessie would have cried her eyes out if they had gone to walk without her, and neither Prince nor Grandpa-Master could have borne to see Bessie in tears (or to go to walk without her, either).

They *always* walked together; Bessie, and her grandpa, and Prince. They all enjoyed these walks together immensely. I think that Bessie's grandpapa as he walked sometimes thought of other walks with two other Bessies who had been very dear to him, and that sometimes as Prince ran here and there, his brown coat, gleaming glossy in the sun, carried his master's mind far away to waving prairies where, with Emperor, and Emperor's

father Duke, and Duke's father Kaiser, he had passed endlessly happy hours in bygone years. They had all been great friends and boon companions of Prince's master once on a time, and Prince was the heir of their strength and skill. The dog did not know why sometimes a little sparrow taking a sun-bath made him halt quivering and draw up one fore-paw and look back to where the two came along the path. But his master knew and understood and the sudden halt and backward look always sent a thrill to his heart that matched the young dog's quiver of mysterious longing. "Steady, old fellow!" Bessie's grandpapa would call out in low clear tones, and then Prince would find himself impelled to move step by step nearer until with a gay chirp the sparrow was up, off, and away, and the brown dog frisked gaily on. Bessie's grandpapa used to be reminded then to tell her hunting stories of Duke and Kaiser and "coveys" of nineteen and twenty-four birds, but Prince did not stay for the stories, — he remembered nothing of his grand ancestors, and had never even seen a prairie. He had never even seen a gun for that matter, and as for a "covey" he would not have known what it meant. In fact Prince was not aware that he came of a hunting race. All that he could recall of any life except the present was that he had been shipped in a crate three years before and after a fearful journey of endless duration had arrived in what is called "very bad condition."

"Very bad condition" means broken when it is china, but when it is a six-months-old puppy it means such suffering from fright and loneliness that food could not be taken and brown eyes had become big and hollow with dried tears in their corners, silky ears worn bare with the tossing of an aching head, curls dirty and matted, and the whole body a feeble, shaky little skeleton. Such was the beginning of Prince's memories.

Grandpa-Master had driven in town himself and he never forgot how, upon going into the big crowded baggage-room, he had found what he called "one of Queenie's babies" in such a plight. He could hardly get men to knock the crate to pieces quickly enough, and before the slats on one side were off he had the carriage-robe laid out on the floor and himself lifted the forlorn little dog out upon the soft wool. And then he had carried him in his own arms to the carriage where Bessie was waiting, wild with impatience to see the new pet. But when she did see them coming, one look into grandpapa's eyes stilled her impatience and when she saw the thin, tired little brown head on his arm, she understood not to ask questions. Grandpapa held the dog tenderly in his arms all the way home and Bessie cuddled close.

"Will he get well?" she whispered just once.

"He will," said grandpapa, almost grimly.

Arrived at their house Prince was taken (still in

his new master's arms) straight to the brick-floor room behind the kitchen and there given a grand bath. Not many dogs have such baths, for when it was over he was taken out into another warm blanket and laid — still in the blanket — into a great basket full of hay. His eyes were almost closed by that time and Auguste carried the basket to grandpapa's own room and put it down in one corner. And there Prince slept till the middle of that afternoon, quite undisturbed, for he never knew when Bessie and her grandpapa came on tiptoe, together as well as separately, to look at his slumber and smile over the tired, comfortable little sighs that he kept heaving as he slept.

It was quite late when he awoke finally and sat up feebly and peeked over the side of the basket. They warmed some milk and he drank a little and then lay down and went to sleep again, and by noon of the next day he was up and out of his basket. So that when all the family came to have tea by grandpapa's fire, Prince was lying on the rug before it with his eyes bright and full of interest in everything and everybody.

And within a fortnight he became just as strong and well as any little dog could wish.

Grandpapa changed his name here to Grandpa-Master because Bessie solemnly promised Prince one half of her dearest relation "forever and ever."

"You are not just a grandpapa now," she said,

leading the dog into the sunny upstairs room where a cigar was being placidly smoked and a newspaper placidly read, — “you are a Grandpapa-Master. We have arranged it all down in the arbor.” I will not say that Bessie said quite those words for her language was still somewhat indistinct and uncertain, but Grandpa-Master understood and put his cigar and paper away and took Bessie up, and Prince snuggled in among their knees and they were a very congenial trio.

Every morning after that at eight o'clock Jaqueline said “Go call Bessie, Prince,” and Prince soon learned what she meant and would dash out of the kitchen and around through the arbor and stop under Bessie's window and there give one sharp, short bark, then wait, and after a minute give another, and then wait again. And he never stopped until Bessie opened her curtains and wished him “good-morning”; as soon as she did that he would run back to the kitchen and stand at attention for his next duty which was to go upstairs behind Marie when she carried Grandpa-Master's breakfast tray. Once the breakfast tray went up the rest of the day's work was simple; it consisted in keeping Grandpapa-Master company except while he was at luncheon and dinner (Prince had his in the kitchen) and in shaking hands all around at eight o'clock and retiring for the night.

At eight o'clock the family went into the *salon* and

Bessie went to bed, and as Prince never entered the *salon*, and could not go upstairs with Bessie, his day naturally ended at eight o'clock. I think that his one goldenly glorious hour was when the family all came to Grandpa-Master's room for tea at four o'clock. In the summer they always had tea in the arbor, but rainy days and winter days they always had it in Grandpa-Master's room. He had a big room and it had a big screen that shut off his bed so that the room was really a sitting room or library. There were big bookcases, and a big table, and a big couch, and a big painted picture of the sweet-faced, gray-haired Bessie whom Bessie only knew as a lovely story; — but best of all was the big, big, fireplace with the wide shelf above, and the soft sleepy-hollow chairs around, and the hassocks and the bear skin and the shining frame that held the shining tongs and shovel, and the cunning broom with which Grandpa-Master used to brush Prince occasionally, saying to Bessie with a twinkle as he did so, "Don't tell your mother for she has an impression that this is meant only for ashes." Bessie thought it delightful to keep such a secret and she and Grandpa-Master *always* brushed Prince with the ash-broom 'way through to Christmas, and then imagine their feelings when on Christmas morning Bessie's mamma gave Prince a nice little broom of his own with a pretty card inscribed "For Prince — *not* for ashes."

I forgot to say that there was one day each year when Prince *did* go into the *salon* and that was — of course — on Christmas. Nobody went into the *salon* the day before Christmas, and on Christmas-day everyone went. Jacqueline went and came out with ever so many bundles, and Marie went, and Auguste went, and Prince went with the rest. And all received presents and a glass of wine and a piece of cake, and the postman when he came by found his wine and cake and a nice little parcel waiting for him, too. It was a joyous day and Bessie and Prince were in the thick of it all. How they did scamper upstairs and almost tumble down again! Bessie's mamma kept remembering things that she had forgotten and sending Bessie to get them, and Prince forgot all *his* presents until they were upstairs for tea and then had to carry them to each one in a basket, wagging his tail every minute as he did so. Bessie's mamma brought up the tea herself that afternoon as the maids were gone for a half-holiday by this time, and Bessie poured it out, and just for the fun of it they put the cake plate into Prince's basket and let him pass it around.

It was a happy day, and so were all the Christmases that followed for the next few years. Everything seemed to go on just the same until Bessie was twelve years old and then changes began. Many changes, and three of special moment. In the first place there was the coming of the pony. The pony was a very

THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOG 271

pretty one and Bessie was beside herself with joy. She rode it in the court the first day and all through the park in a week. In a month she was out on the highroad galloping gaily along with Auguste behind her holding Juno back till poor Juno frothed at the mouth. Prince went with them the first days, but as Bessie learned to ride further and faster Prince learned that he could n't keep up. He wanted to, — he tried to, — but he could n't do it. He could n't understand why it was n't possible and at first it was all a sad puzzle to him, but he soon recognized that for some strange reason his long loping run was now gone from him, and so when Bessie was going to ride he came down into the court with Grandpa-Master and watched her mount, and watched Auguste mount also, and then when they rode out he would run after them a few steps and whine a little, but he soon gave over even that, and although his eyes continued wistful, he simply stood close to the one he loved until Grandpa-Master said, "They're off now; — come, old fellow, we'll go back upstairs," and then he would wag his tail and trot cheerfully into the house.

That was one change.

Another was that they took tea in the *salon* now. The *salon* had been newly decorated in green and gold, and Bessie's mamma had a beautiful tea-service with a wonderful old Chippendale tea-caddy, and *such* an antique kettle, and she liked to have

tea downstairs and use her pretty things. Grandpa-Master did not like to come downstairs and Prince was forbidden the *salon* so they had their tea upstairs the same as ever. Marie carried it up all pretty and bright on the red lacquered tray with the toast crisp and hot and the little vase of violets in the middle, and Bessie went up often and had hers with them. Prince lay on the floor always and Grandpa-Master petted him with the toe of his slipper while he drank his tea. Sometimes if there was company downstairs the sound of their voices and laughter used to float out through the dining room and up the staircase. It was so very quiet upstairs that one could notice any sounds. Bessie used to sit close to Grandpa-Master's knee and pet his hand just as he petted Prince. They did n't talk much.

That was the second change.

The third change was the greatest of all. It was a most astonishing change and neither Bessie, Grandpa-Master, nor Prince, could ever understand it, although it made them all so much happier.

It came after a Christmas — the Christmas that brought Bessie into her teens. The house was full that happy holytide, and all was extremely gay — gayer than it had ever been. I will not say that it was a happier holiday time than had ever been before, but it was certainly a gayer. They had a big tree and a silver-thread maze of presents, and Prince received a new collar, and everything “went off”

THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOG 273

most beautifully. The prettiest gift was a wee white fluff-ball that someone sent Bessie from Dresden and which was really not a fluff-ball at all, but a little lap-dog of the newest and most fashionable kind. I don't believe that Prince knew at first that the roly-poly bit of wool was really a live dog like himself, but he learned it soon, and he learned something else too, and that was that the new dog could enter the *salon* when he pleased, Christmas or no Christmas, and this was a great shock to the old Irish setter.

Life is no even-flowing current for any of us, — it is more like a series of cascades one of which projects us suddenly to where we find our baby-privileges all withdrawn; and then another teaches that the responsibilities of life are no longer in contemplation but actually upon our shoulders; and then only a little while longer and with the third and dizziest fall of all we discover that we are no longer the bearers of the burdens, but the burdens themselves instead. The real tragedy of the latter comes from the unwillingness of most big, generous hearts to recognize the truth of the old proverb of the bread upon the waters. When one has cast forth plenteously why should there be any hesitation as to welcoming the richly laden tide when it turns back? What is better than giving unless it be receiving back one's own, enriched with love and tears and that most blessed gift of God to his children — Gratitude?

Yet that is one of life's hardest lessons for dog or man, and when Bessie's pony outstripped his halting lope and the new dog dwelt in the forbidden Elysium unquestioned, poor Prince had to begin to work it out for himself and accept the answer in that silence assigned to dogs and age. It was life; it was natural; he could not keep up with the pony, and the new dog was a pretty parlor toy, and as for himself, — well he was happy at the feet of his dear master.

But of course it hurt. He had no wish to harm the wooly white thing but going up and downstairs he always knew that it was in there, and at night when he went away at eight o'clock he used to stand still a minute by the door sometimes and listen. It was always so light and bright in the *salon*, and the other dog was in there, on Bessie's lap likely, — and he was on his way to his hay bed in the *grange* outside in the dark.

Bessie was growing fast now. She was getting really tall. Everyone said that she would be exactly like her mamma. She had a sweet mamma, very pretty, and who played and sang most beautifully. But it was not her prettiness nor her singing and playing that made everyone love Bessie's mother; it was her dear and loving heart. She always declared that her greatest ambition was that everyone about her should be as happy as she was herself, and as she was a warm-hearted, impulsive creature, full of sweet, unselfish kindness, her ambition was generally

fulfilled. The house overflowed with her gayety and her wide-flowing thoughtfulness, and in spite of a thousand claims upon her days, she still used to get up often in the night just to steal in and kiss Bessie in her sleep exactly as she had been used to do thirteen years ago. It seemed to be necessary to Bessie's mother that all about her should be happy and look happy and think happy thoughts. She used to toss away her work and run down into the garden to give her father a big hug when he and Prince were walking there together if she only fancied that he looked grave. She always had that same way of thinking of doing something for somebody, and jumping up at once and dashing off to do it. That was how she came that January evening to wonder if Auguste had carried up an extra armful of wood for Grandpa-Master's fire, and, directly she wondered, to leave the circle around the other fire in the *salon* and dart off to make sure.

Quickly she crossed the dining room and threw open the door into the hall, and as she threw the door open she saw something shrink into the corner and then under the long wrap-shelf. She stood still — startled at first — and then she saw that it was only old Prince, who, upon quitting his master as usual at eight o'clock, had paused in the hall to listen to the pleasant human sounds drifting from the room beyond. He came out now and came towards Bessie's mother, wagging his tail and lifting

his eyes in earnest apology if he had frightened her, or if it had been wrong for him to steal that little bit of jolly noise not meant for him.

Bessie's mother stood quite still; the court-door was open and Prince, having looked into her face for a minute, turned towards it to go out to his night-quarters.

But she stopped him quickly, seizing his head in her two hands and turning his noble eyes up to her own again. The old dog's expression was such that his châtelaine suddenly loosed him and covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Prince, Prince! — I see it all. I understand it all. Come, come back upstairs with me."

He understood. She understood. Side by side the two went upstairs together.

Grandpa-Master was not reading; he was sitting before his fire — alone.

"Papa," said his daughter's voice there behind him, "I've brought Prince back upstairs. I'm going to have Auguste make him a bed by yours at night after this —"

She stopped right there because her father had lifted his blue eyes — (which were her eyes and Bessie's too) — up to her face. He smiled and she fell down at his knee, sobbing, — "Papa, papa, — forgive me. I was very, very thoughtless."

.
The next morning when Bessie went for her ride

THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOG 277

Auguste did not go with her on Juno. Instead he harnessed Juno into the cart and Grandpa-Master drove with him and between their knees sat Prince "as happy as a king" with his new Christmas collar on his neck.

What a ride Bessie had that morning! Flying far ahead of them and then turning and racing back to show her grandpapa how straight and how well she could sit her horse. The pony jumped ditches and ran around much as Prince himself had been used to do in the days of long ago. And now he was so happy watching her, and Grandpapa-Master was happy. Happy with the rich sweet joy of combining one's own glad memories with one's great gladness in another's future. Very few of us ever appreciate how good we really are until the day comes that we realize how much more precious are the hopes we build around others than were ever those we built in our most buoyant days around ourselves.

That was certainly a glorious ride, and more joy followed, for that afternoon everyone — company and all — had tea upstairs just as they used to do, and Bessie poured and Prince passed the cake, and the white wool ball sat stupidly blinking on one of the hassocks and appeared too insignificant and brainless for words.

And after dinner that night Auguste brought a big cushion stuffed with dried grass and carried it upstairs, and when Grandpa-Master came to bed he

found his old friend stretched out upon it fast asleep. Grandpa-Master was rather late coming to bed that evening for they had insisted on his telling a story, and then Bessie's mamma had sung two of his favorite songs. She came upstairs with her father and came into his room and kissed him tenderly with her arms clasped fast about his neck.

"It's good of you to send the dog up here," he said, "he's a great companion to me, but I know how you hate dogs in the house."

Bessie's mamma opened her eyes widely.

"But I don't hate dogs in the house any more," she said, — "*I love* dogs in the house now."

And that was the third great change, — the greatest change of all.

HIS MAJESTY AND THE FAIRIES

THERE was once upon a time a King who said one day to one of his court, "I believe that I should like to pay a visit to Fairyland."

That was all that he said, but the etiquette of kings and courts is such that the royal remark was at once carried (on a purple velvet cushion borne by two lovely little pages in golden curls and very short puffy breeches) to Fairyland and delivered to the Fairy Chamberlain, who forthwith flew with it to the King of all the Fairies, who at once called a cabinet meeting of All the heads of all the departments under his rule to the end that he might consult them in regard to so great a question.

The heads of all the departments hurried to court the instant they received the royal summons, and the meeting took place that very night at midnight in the beautiful open glade where Hubert the pagan hunter saw the white stag bearing a crucifix between his horns, and so fell on his knees, converted then and there, and became a Christian.

The glade is not so very large, and the forest is

thick about it and the ferns grow rankly all around the edge, but above the sky opens free, and by day the golden sun and by night the silver moon, shine stilly down into its green depths.

The Department of Absolute Order on receipt of their own particular summons had at once sent two hundred thousand picked ants to put the glade in order. Every grass blade had been carefully wiped, every leaf had been twisted to hang straight, every mushroom had been specially polished with alcohol put to the powder, and then new chamois after the towel. It all looked most lovely.

The church bell in the village was just tolling twelve when the King of all the Fairies arrived prompt as usual and took his seat on a beautiful St. George Mushroom with a still more beautiful Parasol Mushroom so arranged as to keep the Moon from driving him mad before the business part of the meeting should be over. The heads of the departments sat around on Blue Caps and Blewets, and the Head of the Department of Underground Doings — a mole — sat on a hedgehog.

When Court-Crier-Cricket had finished calling the roll the Spider-Guards ran quickly over everyone and wove them to their seats so that nothing nor nobody could n't *never* break up this meeting. After that there was a profound silence, most flattering to the King.

He rose then and made a speech, telling them

why he had called them in consultation and what the other King had said in his note. And then he explained to them that under such circumstances it behooved Fairyland to be up and doing at once. "For," the King of all the Fairies went smoothly on, "we must do our kingdom justice in the eyes of this King of Mortals. Fairyland has a high reputation for charm, enchanting beauty, and exquisite color; we must not fail to keep the good name that is ours."

"But what must we do?" interrupted the Head of the Department of Winter Provisioning, — a squirrel. "We are what we are. We can't be anything else."

The King smiled. "That is just it," he said, "that is just the difficulty — we are what we are and we *must* be something else."

"Why?" cried all the Opposite Bench together.

"Because our Royal Visitor is a mortal," said the King, "and therefore we must create a Fairyland that he can admire. Don't you understand?"

"No," shouted the Opposition, and a lot of them started to go out, but were tenderly restrained by their spider-web bonds.

"This is what we must do," said the King, "we must organize a Bureau of Loud, Big, and Bright Improvement at once, and we must get Fairyland ready for mortal eyes and ears. Every leaf in the forest must be painted red and green."

"The under side too?" yelled the Opposition, derisively.

"The under side too," said the King, good-humoredly; "and every bit of tree bark must be carefully shaded in the high-lights; dew-drops must be quadrupled in size; sunbeams filed a bit at the tip; small evergreens planted on the mole hills."

"Why not let me throw up my hills where there are trees already?" suggested the mole who was listening with acute interest; "if anyone would jump up and down on the earth or whistle under a tree I could just as well come up there as anywhere. I never know where I'm coming up and that's why I keep the fields so untidy."

"Who says 'Aye' to this?" the King inquired of the Meeting, and everyone cried "Aye, Aye," right heartily. For the mole had n't an enemy in Fairyland owing to the fact that he could n't see anyone and nobody ever saw him.

"You understand why we must do all this," the King went on presently; "we want to make a good impression on the first mortal King who visits us. If we left Fairyland as it is he would be like almost all the other mortals and not notice when he passed our border and not see any of our wonders. We must make him see. We must teach him."

Even the Opposition could not but understand the wisdom of this, and all heads nodded wisely.

HIS MAJESTY AND THE FAIRIES 283

"I want all the baby rabbits well brushed," continued the King, speaking pleasantly enough but in a tone that showed that he meant it. "I have noticed a number of very untidy baby rabbits scurrying here and there lately. And when a squirrel takes his lunch in a tree I want the shells picked up and put away afterward. To leave them lying carelessly about is a poor way of doing and can never come to any good end. I want all the little winged spiders who get down human collars to go on a six months Cook's Tour to Palestine and Asia Minor for reasons which are not necessary to enter into here. The ants and bees must organize at once in the common need of Neatness and Refreshments. Kings are uncertain, and it is necessary that we be ready any and every second from now till he comes. That's all."

The King took his seat as he had said the last words and his own Personal Body-Guard of Gnomes hastened to remove the Parasol Mushroom, for it was just the night to go mad by moonlight, and that was the usual pastime of the fairies and their king when work was over.

Those who were not fairies, being ripped out of their bonds forthwith, all departed for their separate places of abode.

The rabbit, who had been mortified to death by the allusion of her children's appearance, bit off dead grasses as she ran, meaning to make a

little brush, and begin on improving her babies' coats at once. The squirrel leaping from bough to bough above was bad-tempered over the new rule about nutshells.

"They don't hurt anybody," he said.

"They don't hurt but they're horrid inconvenient to climb over," said the ant (whom he was carrying on his back unbeknownst); "you'll be a dear if you'll pick them up after this. You've no idea what it means to get a dead fly over one of your cast-off nutshells."

The squirrel liked being called a dear and all his snippy little bad temper faded at once.

The next day everybody went to work with a will and *such* a scene as ensued. The cricket sat under a tree and chirped at the top of his chirp so that the mole would know where to come up. Fairies hung thick over every bough, painting leaves as if their fairness depended on it. Armies of caterpillars were busy regulating the ins and outs of the tree-bark. The slickest little rabbits that you ever saw went skipping here and there. The squirrel with a Rucksack on his back was working like a dog picking up all his own old nutshells. The deer were studying graceful attitudes in picturesque spots. The butterflies were adding life and color where it was most needed. The bees were putting up preserves. The ants were cleaning wherever the snails had left their glassy, gluey trail. It was a busy time.

HIS MAJESTY AND THE FAIRIES 285

Meanwhile a lovely letter had been written the Royal Visitor begging him to believe himself welcome at any minute that he might choose to come. He wrote back that they must not take any trouble or do anything different on his account as his plans were so uncertain always. "I *may* come next week," he wrote, "or I *may* go to Aix-la-Chapelle. I think that I shall come next week for I really want to come as soon as I can. It may rain and then it would have to be put off indefinitely. The only thing that could prevent my coming next week is that the Lord Chamberlain has bought my train ticket and reserved my hotel suite at Aix."

The Fairy diplomats did not know just how to decipher this royal meaning, but later a swallow came down from above and told them that all the royal waiting rooms were being dusted in every railway station en route to Aix so they could not but see that the visit was deferred.

A week later they received word from Aix that the King might stop on his way back.

But he did n't; he went home another way and sent them a handsome souvenir album of views of himself here and there with his autograph in front. And from then on the summer wore away.

The baby rabbits grew big enough to brush one another and then big enough to see families of little brothers and sisters arrive to be brushed in their turn, — but still no King. The squirrel picked up

shells until he became so round-shouldered that he had to buy shoulder-braces — but still no King. The leaves were kept painted until the Goddess October came on her annual visit and did them all herself as usual and Fairyland was a sight for gods and men both then, — but still no King.

The leaves turned brown and fell to the ground. The grass put on its winter weave, the birds went south, — all but a very few, — the pine-trees suddenly started into prominence, the deer became very active, the pheasants grew very nervous, and it all combined to make one know that winter was at hand. And still no further word from the King.

Then one night the snow fell and winter was there, and then they gave him up completely.

But we all know what happens *then*.

The very next week arrived for the second time the lovely little pages with golden curls and short, puffy breeches, bearing on a purple velvet cushion the word that the King would be with them Tuesday (to-morrow) by the Landesbahn, which, when it is on time, gets in about noon.

The message struck Fairyland like an Alpine avalanche. They had so completely given up all hope of a visit that everyone was gone into winter quarters. Most of the workers were asleep, and the mole was burrowing through the snow in every direction and coming up anywhere that the fancy struck him. At first the King of all the Fairies felt

HIS MAJESTY AND THE FAIRIES 287

as if he almost wished that he had never gone out of his way to be friendly with mortals. It was a most trying hour.

But he rallied quickly and all the fairies departed in all directions and woke everyone up, and when everyone knew that this time it was an absolutely certain thing, and when two swallows came down with the news that the royal waiting rooms in every station were having fires built in them, they took tremendous heart at once, and simply flew at the apparently endless task of setting the fairy world to rights in one day and one night.

The most awful difficulty was the snow, but all took hold together and, as it was not very deep, the deer and rabbits laid on it and melted it in that way; the angle-worms came up in all directions and ate it, and the sunbeams lighted a special blaze and cleaned it off of every tree and bush.

The most terrible task was putting the leaves back on the trees, standing the grass up again, and painting all of both. The ants worked like little Trojans and the birds helped just as well as they knew how. The mole felt dreadfully that he could n't do something, so just to keep from hurting his feelings they set him to throwing up a little Bismarck-Säule, and he was so energetic that he had it done by the time for coffee and they had to let him do a Kaiser Wilhelm Denkmal to occupy his evening.

They worked all night wiping off the frost which would gather on the back side of everything and the next morning they were indeed proud of their labor.

Fairyland was gorgeous. One would have said a bright September day. They had sent to town and rented oil stoves which were hidden in every hollow tree trunk, and warmed the air most pleasantly. The bees and butterflies filled the tops of the heated trees so that as soon as the King appeared they could act as spry as if it were really summer. The rabbits were running all over in either clean collars or fresh hair ribbons — just as the case might be. The squirrel skipped to and fro with his Rucksack, just to be sure that no stray nutshell had escaped him, — and the pheasants formed a stately Grenadier-Guard, waiting the signal to march to meet the train.

The King arrived.

The King was met.

The King came up the hill and into Fairyland.

They presented him with the Key to the Fields, the ancient insignia of Freedom complete and eternal, — and then they conducted him all through their peerless demesne. The scene was wonderful. The bright glory of sunlight on all that riot of brilliant color and swarming, happy life.

The mother-rabbit stood at her door and courtesied to the ground as the procession passed her

HIS MAJESTY AND THE FAIRIES 289

humble hole. The deer were taking their prettiest attitudes and leaping off and hurrying around the back way to appear ahead and to do them over again. The leaves rustled so that all the Fairies were more than a little nervous lest they should drop off before the fête was over. The little oil stoves worked as hard and fast and steadily as possible, and the sunbeams met them half way in their endeavors.

The visiting King was conducted to a bower erected between six hollow trees with hot water bottles concealed in the chair cushions and footstools and there served nectar and honey, while the bees hummed a hymn of happiness overhead among the nice warm boughs, and invisible hands served everything neither before it was wanted nor after it was wanted but just exactly as one was ready.

When the Royal Visitor was through a little dance was arranged among the Radium Fairies for his pleasure and a Deputation of Gnomes came out of the ground at his feet and begged his acceptance of a seal cut in a magnificent pigeon's blood ruby.

And then — when the afternoon Landesbahn was due in half an hour, a detachment of Bee Workers fetched the guest's green felt hat (for the King always dressed in good taste) and his sword, and they all made ready to go to the station with him.

“And I do hope that you found our land a pretty

one!" said the King of all the Fairies to his brother King as he fluttered about his ear; "we love it and think it very nice, you know."

They were going down the hill now with the Pheasant Guard fore and aft, the fairies ahead, the gnomes behind, and several thousand wasps in plain clothes everywhere.

"Oh, it's very nice, very nice," said the visiting monarch, pleasantly, "but if I could only have seen it in the wintertime, you know, — *that* is what I should have liked. It must be beautiful then. Just a sprinkle of snow would make it Fairyland indeed. But very few have my intense appreciation of art." He sighed and shook his head.

And then he heard the train and had to run or he would certainly have missed it.

And so ended the visit of His Mortal Majesty to the Fairy King of all the Fairies in Fairyland.

THE CLOSING OF SANTA CLAUS' DOOR

THE door was positively partly open! Brian stood petrified at the sight. That door had been closed for three days. Mysterious noises had resounded from behind it. A curious, half-suggestive delightful kind of odor lingered in the hall near it. Papa, Mamma, and Aunt Bertha slipped in and out of it in a suspicious — not to say guilty — manner. The whole business was strange, very strange. The door was *always* closed. And now it was absolutely open — that is to say, partly open. About four inches open.

And to make things worse, right in the opening lay a little sprig of Christmas greens. Very curious. Of course, Brian knew about Christmas, because he had seen one and remembered its joys with great distinction. And he knew that another Christmas was approaching now because Nurse had him mark the days off on the calendar that hung over his bed. It was coming in three days. Santa Claus was going to bring it. Santa Claus brought everything.

A curious little thrill ran all through Brian, from his curly mop of hair down to his sandaled feet.

"Santa Claus is bringing Christmas now," he thought, "and he is putting it in that room, and the door is open, and I can look."

And yet something held him back. He could not understand why or what; but something kept him from looking. It was very curious, because there seemed to be no reason for his *not* looking. There he was right by the door, and the door was partly open, and it was most interesting on the further side, and yet he hesitated to look.

It was cold in the hall, and fast growing dark. Papa and Mamma had gone away with the jingle-bells and big white Bob. Nurse was rocking Phyllis to sleep in the nursery above. Brian had been sent down to stay in the sitting room, and now here was the open door blocking his path.

It was a curious place and hour for a little soul — so very new to life — to have its first great problem thrust upon it. And it was curious how Brian stood there in the twilight and battled fiercely without even knowing that he was being tempted. It seemed to him quite right and proper that he should look through that generous crack and satisfy himself as to the mystery within — only something prevented.

The something not only prevented his taking one step further down the hall, but it also made his heart beat very fast and his little face burn hotly.

CLOSING OF SANTA CLAUS' DOOR 293

What could it be? He clasped his small hands tightly together and tried to think it out.

"It is n't wrong to look," he said to himself, "because Santa Claus left it open, and, of course, if he left it open, he knew that anyone could look."

But even this reasoning did not advance his feet one step. Only his heart beat faster and faster, and his forehead grew hotter and wetter beneath the thick, soft curls.

Just then an odd thing happened. In the fast fading light a little mouse scampered down the hall, past Brian and past the door. Brian was not at all afraid of mice, Nurse having taught him (with a view to bravery rather than to zoölogy) that mice were baby rats and always running to do their parents' bidding; but he was surprised at not having heard it before he saw it. And the next thing he thought was how the little mouse had not stopped one second by the open door.

"He just ran by," thought the boy, "and I will just run by too."

And he covered his eyes with his hands and rushed forthwith past the yawning gates of Paradise, landing two seconds later in the cheerful sitting room where Aunt Bertha was placidly knitting.

"Why, Brian," said his Auntie, "what is the matter?"

She looked so startled and surprised that he felt quite confused.

"Nothing is the matter, Auntie," he tried to say, and then, to his own great astonishment, his chin quivered and he burst into tears. Aunt Bertha threw down the knitting and gathered him close in her arms at once.

"Tell me all about it, darling," she said; but Brian would not say a word until his sobs were quieted and his equilibrium completely restored. And then he did not tell her very much. He only asked:

"Auntie, when you want to do something and something stops you — something that is n't anything — what is it that stops you?"

Aunt Bertha looked into his big, sweet eyes, and her own eyes grew deeper.

"It is your conscience that stops you, Brian," she said, laying her hand on his.

"And must you mind it?"

"Always."

"The same as Nurse?"

"Yes."

He was silent for a minute or two, and then he slipped from her knee and went and stood by the window and thought.

And then he left the room and went out into the dark hall again.

"It was my conscience," he whispered to himself in an odd, awe-stricken tone. He knew what his conscience was, but he had never come face to face



“ ‘ Brian,’ she said, ‘ it’s rather a fine thing to be an English gentleman.’ ”

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

- R

L

CLOSING OF SANTA CLAUS' DOOR 295

with it before, so to speak. And so that was what had held him back.

It was quite dark in the hall now, and the only light that there was shone through the crack of the opened door. Step by step he approached it, until finally his little hand rested on its panels. His heart was beating fast again, his little face blazed hotly, but there was no puzzle in his brain.

Slowly, very slowly, the little hand pressed and pressed, and after a few seconds the door yielded and closed softly.

Then Brian turned and retraced his steps to the sitting room.

Aunt Bertha was gone for a minute, and when she came back she found him sitting close before the fire, his chin in his hands and his elbows on his knees. He looked up at her and smiled, and was surprised to see that her eyes were wet.

"Brian," she said, kneeling down beside him on the hearth rug, "it's rather a fine thing to be an English gentleman — isn't it?"

He did not quite understand.

"But you're not one," he said.

"No, but you are."

"Am I, Auntie?"

She nodded.

Outside the jingle-bells were sounding, and Papa and Mamma were returning from their drive. The next minute they both came into the room, and who

should they have with them but Grandmamma — Grandmamma in her yellow fur collar that always made her look wintry and sunshiny.

"Merry Christmas, Brian," said Grandmamma, as he ran to hug her.

"But it is n't Christmas yet," said Brian; "I know, because I'm marking my calendar."

"I think that you must have forgotten to mark it some days then," said Grandmamma, "because this is Christmas Eve."

He was quite dumbfounded. That meant that directly after tea the mysteries beyond the door would all be thrown open to him. You can imagine how much appetite he felt for his food in the circumstances.

And now comes the really wonderful part of my story.

I could not possibly do justice to what *was* in that room when everyone entered it after tea that night. It was so full and so beautiful that it was quite astonishing to think that Santa Claus could have managed so much all by himself. There was a Christmas tree, also holly wreaths, also greens looped in every direction, also toys, also books, also pretty nearly everything. But in front of all was a splendid horse with a spring so fastened under him that there was no comparison whatever between his motion and the old-fashioned rocking-horse that looks so foolish. And tied to the horse's neck was

CLOSING OF SANTA CLAUS' DOOR 297

a letter with a big red seal, and Papa took it and opened it, and read it aloud. And it said :

"MY DEAR FRIENDS, — In my hurry this afternoon I rushed off leaving the door open. When I returned to light the candles on the Christmas tree I found the door shut. The fairies tell me that whoever shut the door shut it to help keep my Christmas secrets inside, and I am very much obliged to him or her for so doing. I desire to present this horse to whoever shut the door. Please inquire for the name.

"Yours most truly,

"SANTA CLAUS."

"This is very remarkable," said Papa. "Who can have shut the door? Did you shut it?" he asked Aunt Bertha.

"No," said Aunt Bertha, "I was in the sitting room."

So Papa asked everyone in the room, one after another.

Brian was standing by his mother, holding her hand, and his face was all one crimson glow. He was the youngest person present, so he was the last asked. He was so excited that he could hardly speak.

"Brian, did you shut the door?" his father said.

"Yes, Papa."

There was a minute's hush, and then of a sudden the church bells rang out across the snow in celebration of the coming of the Christmastide.

Brian had his arms around the horse's neck, and the happy tears stood on his long eyelashes. He looked at them all in a sort of speechless rapture, and then all looked at him.

And then at last he spoke:

"I will run just like the mouse always," he said earnestly, "and I will go in the dark and shut *all* the doors."

Behind that speech lay the resolution that bases a future on the Rock of Right.

"God bless him!" said Grandmamma.

THE SOUL OF A TREE

It was snug and moist and warm. Crumpled somethings, at once damp and dry, pressed close. A very little, weary black bug, tugging the day's provision home to its buglets, climbed up and then fell abruptly down the other side of the hard grayness just to the right. One little bright golden slit was where a determined spear of green pushed upward. A soft hush-hushing sounded off in the same direction. The spirit of the bug and the green spear seemed to be mysteriously omnipresent. All and everything were swelling, striving, bursting. Some strange impulse throbbed through the whole. Not here but further. Not this size but somewhat larger. To-day looking and living for to-morrow. Me for myself, but longing to add to Me, You. Or if I may not add You to Myself, at least I will grow, I will develop, I will learn, — that I may be a bigger thing, more worthy You, and more worthy God.

"What is all this?" whispered the Unborn. "What do I feel? What am I seeking? And why do I feel and seek?"

The question went forth in tiny rainbow waves

of intense desire, and from the Source of all Knowledge the answer floated back. Nature's answer.

"This is spring. You feel growth. You seek Life. And why? Because you *are* and, being, cannot avoid, or wish to avoid, the Law."

The Unborn took the answer unto itself, and the learning supplied the magic that bursts bonds.

The Unborn pulsed strangely. It knew that it was not, and knew as yet little else. And then suddenly it knew that it was. "*I am*. I can begin to *be*. I am free. I have swelled. I am striving. One push, and then — then Light."

It strove, it swelled, and with that the husk burst, the black mouldy shell parted, — and a little tree was born.

Such a tiny brown thread of a thing. Hair-like in its first delicacy. Yet, small as it was, it stood erect, and peered here and there seeking — searching. It wanted to know. It wanted to know so much. But there was only the brown closeness, the wee limits of a forest nursery. To its appeal no one responded. Nothing said, "These damp yet dryish brown things are leaves — your cradle-nurses." Nothing said, "This tumbling black is a bug." Nothing said, "That golden slit is light." Nothing said, "What you hear calling softly is the wind from the Brocken stealing off to the Black Sea."

All these were lessons to be learned later.

The new wood-child had to cower close and go, as yet, soul-hungry. Later on its birthday the single golden slit turned gray, then dark purple blue. A mighty roar arose above. There was swaying, there was cracking, there was bending, and then there was falling, spattering, ceaseless splashing. Down it came, and down it came. The leaves bore up against conquest at first, but later they clung together. Later still they gave up all thought of resistance and merged into one more layer of forest annualism, one more circle in the graining of ages. The downfall from above continued to come, — sometimes gently, sometimes hardly, but almost always steadily, for a long, long time. To the new-born Son of all the Oaks it seemed as if it would never cease. Then at last — at last it did cease, and another phase of spring had passed.

The little tree emerged from out the leafy loam and looked to right and to left with its two little bright, glossy leaves. There was much more bright green all about and straight up above — oh, very far above there was a sort of magnificent green — a sort of lofty, unattainable green. But that was very, *very* high above. To the right was the same hard grayness that it had known from the first. To the left lay an extensive large ant-settlement. The wind, which was now come into the young thing's universe of Fixed Knowledge — was, as ever, drift-

ing overhead. When it drifted in great waves of force, that green that was so high above parted here and there, and a blue of wondrous beauty shone serene and afar.

"Oh, but life is a wonderful, wonderful thing!" said the little tree; and immense desire swelled in him, and he put forth two more leaves, in further obedience to the Law.

And then he looked about some more. It was warm. It was always warmer. There was a huge hard grayness up on the slope above and the sun reflected on it and it threw the light off in a way of pain instead of drinking it to its use and service as the forest did. Nothing told the little tree that that was a castle. There was jangling. There was clanking. There were screams and shouts and wails and cries. There was trampling; there was neighing. Sunbeams on spear and shield. Brilliancy and bravery. Nothing told the tree that it was a robber raid. With the night they all came back. More screams. More cries. The lashing of whips, or of knotted cords. Imprecations, curses, the wailing of women, the swift frightened patter of sheep feet. In a word, conquest in what was termed "a lordly way." They all went in at the Outer Door and the portcullis fell behind them and their captives. Outside was black stillness and darkness now, in hideous contrast with the riot shut up within. A wolf, who had smelt human blood

as he crossed the lower road, came prowling near, and the tree felt the brush of his furred foot. He paused and he listened, his lip turned back over his hungry teeth.

"The world of men," he growled. And slunk away.

The summer passed. The days were long. Sweet, laughing things with bare feet and active, ravaging, fingers, wandered by often. The birds raised their children and sung them their lesson and chanted passionately over the early deaths of the majority. For the unhooded falcon swooped here and there, the wildcat crept forth at night, and foes were thick about all life that lived and moved and had its being. And the summer slipped swiftly on and was gone.

The lofty green above began to change color; to change many colors; to part in greater spaces; and then to quit its throne so far away and come humbly down to earth. What tales came with it! Ah, the lofty green knew all things. It had watched even the watcher on the watch-tower. It had looked over the walls and into the castle. Not only into the castle but into the narrow windows of keep and hall — of kitchen and dungeon.

"They have Moving Things chained fast to the walls there," whispered the trembling leaves, "just as if they were trees. They have taken them away from God's food and God's water, and they give

them none of their own." The little new tree shuddered. Its being vibrated with despair over the Moving Things hung in immovable misery so near its bursting freedom. It longed to be taller, to look over those walls that rose so high against heaven, and perhaps carry some subtle thought of comfort through the iron prison-bars. It longed, it determined, it willed, — and in the effort it put forth two more leaves. These in obedience to a still higher law. A law not known before.

The blue above grew ever wider and frequent now. It was all wattled and crossed with branches that never ceased weaving and unweaving their pattern by night or by day. The wind had altered its air and sounded wistful and withering. The birds set ceaselessly southward. Loads of all things that those who moved about consumed, went painfully straining and creaking up the winding road. The axe sounded. Trees many centuries removed from the present fell crashing before the winter's oncoming need. The woodcutters were busy all day long.

"What is winter?" the little tree asked of the friendly grayness to its right.

"You will soon know," replied the Overhanging Rock. "What lies about us is autumn. Winter follows."

The leaves began to fall so thickly that the tree felt strange, dim memories of its prenatal condition revive. So had life been before life was. It was

very curious. The leaves continued to fall. At first they were yellow, then red, then brown, then withered and torn and shredded. But each bore its mission and descended to fill it in obedience to the Law. The young tree, tender and unprotected, lifted its need to such gentle care and was soon so wrapped and capped that the soft white snowflakes, falling a little later, were hardly felt at all. The winter came and the winter went, and it lived quiet and reflective, safe under its cover, its growth never ceasing.

Then the spring burst forth on the hillside and the summer came after, and autumns and winters and yet other winters revolved in their turn. Each retreated when spring came on and claimed the fields, and each spring in its turn embraced the sunny summertime, and courtesied herself out backward when the Lady of Bounty lifted her cornucopia high. Throughout them all and thanks to the protecting rock the little tree lived on and on. Thanks to the Spirit born with it, it strove ever higher and spread its resolute roots ever deeper. The wolf's paw no longer brushed it with dangerous strength — it was the wolf's great-grandson who stole close to its side watching an unwitting hare that ran just beyond the Rock. The great-great-grandson of the wolf's great-grandson sought shelter beneath its branches one thunderous night, and the branches kept him dry, wolf though he was. For the Tree's

heart was great as is the heart of every rooted thing. Protection and widespread love is the Rule of the Road in the forest.

The tree was now beginning to think more closely. It was so curious to grow and grow and, with the consciousness of many, many lifetimes locked in one's bosom, to watch the unrooted creatures run their little courses here and there. To one whose life stretches longer than that of a kingdom, there could not seem such a wide difference between the furred Moving Things and the Moving Things who clothed themselves in the furs of others. The Tree could see over the castle wall now and it saw that the castle was big, but often far less well adapted to the needs of the dwellers than was her hole to the rabbit or his hole to the fox. And then they were so cruel, *all* the Moving Things. Cruelty and evil have no existence in the rooted world. But oh! it thrives in the world of activity! By night the hawk watched the wood pigeon, the fox stole on the sleeping pheasant. By night the portcullis went grating up and the horses of the robber-knights trod forth to swoop upon the merchant train. When they came back the Tree shuddered at what it saw and heard. It seemed as if all that could not keep on unpunished forever. A long time perhaps, but surely not forever.

Retribution did come at last. There came one certain night that brought fierce, lithe men with

their cannon, and they planted them surely and swiftly. And then in the three following days the castle walls were brought crashing down. Never in all its life of wayward wickedness had such scenes been enacted as followed then, but the Tree stood without the walls numb, rent by a cannon-ball, sick — sick — sick to its inmost heart.

The great piles of smoking ruins lay all about. The scared peasants stood here and there dumb and awe-stricken and looked on their Terror, now ashes at their feet. The very birds cried wildly as they flew overhead. Such a ruin. Such a ruin.

The Moon came out that night and sailed calmly overhead and the wrenched and wounded tree, looking in the only direction from which True Help can ever come, saw her silver repose, and comprehended that Violence and Terror are only of the World and that Existence is of God. It was worth being torn in two to learn that.

"Shall I be the less great because my perfect form is gone?" asked the Tree-Soul of the Tree-body. And then the answer swelled within it and it felt limitless courage pouring through all its body, and it put forth mightily on the side where the cannon-ball had not ripped and gnashed and thought no more of the other.

The Moving Things ran to and fro beneath its branches and dragged the stones of the ruin this way and that, and hunted for treasures which they never

found, and finally went back down to the valley and plain, and tilled and reaped, and tilled and reaped, and tilled and reaped, year after year.

"They never seem to change," said the Tree to the Rock. "There are always just so many of each age. Just so many old and so many young. Just so many that cannot move yet and just so many that cannot move much longer. I grow and spread my branches and lift my head ever higher towards heaven, but they never advance. They seem more motionless than me — more motionless than you."

"It is all part of the Divine Plan," said the Rock; "they would not be if there were not a reason for their being, but with the reason you and I have not to concern ourselves."

The third century rolled around, and the Tree which had once been sheltered by the Overhanging Rock looked down now and saw a small gray stone held fast in the grip of two of its roots. The progeny of the wolf had been driven from the land. The wildcat too was gone. The plain was blocked off in peaceful farms, the droves of sheep and hogs were become property instead of booty. Truly, the Moving Things seemed to be moving in better ways.

It came out of the north — just a silver veil. And as it drifted southward the lightning charged it with force. It became a blue cloud — and then one

of blackest ink. And then one of strongest wind. And then one of irresistible fury. Church spire and windmill went down before it, and the woodland too. The trees locked branches and crashed, carrying the forest's future with them. It was terrible. The Tree was riven to its very heart. It was so hard to see any reason in such ruthless waste. And yet Good was born in that hour. Out of the wreckage of the most frightful storm ever known to man or legend, there came an understanding that the Plain should not monopolize all the learning — that the Forest had a claim also. And so they, the Moving Things, set to work, and cut out the hopelessly mangled, and released the bent saplings, and dug crossways for the water, and worked very hard indeed; and of their learning was born the new Order.

Men in grayish green, soldier-like in discipline and precision, held sway where the wolf had once hunted, and their government was good and true and prosperous.

The woodcutters, planting little young trees on the débris of the castle walls, looked up at the old oak that stood strong and sturdy beside them. "It was a fine thing that the cannon and the Great Storm spared it," said one to another; and the man to whom he spoke looked up at the rough gnarled branches and nodded. The Oak sighed. It knew

that the cannon had not spared it — nor the Storm either. It knew that the Storm had wrenched its old wound apart and that all the size and grandeur were become a menace to its own life. Another wind and what! — “It must be hundreds and hundreds of years old,” said the first speaker again. “It must have seen a lot.”

The Tree listened, its death-wound all aching, and sighed again, more heavily yet. It was becoming aware of its age now. It had never felt old before, but now —

The summers passed one after another. The townspeople had rebuilt the castle-tower and crowds came every Sunday and fête-day, and climbed to the top, and cried, “There’s the Brocken! You can see the hotel.” The old oak-tree watched them with interest. It was beginning to long unutterably to understand the Moving Things. In spite of their short, apparently purposeless lives, there was something about them that filled it with vague desires. It tried to hush its curiosity by recalling the words of the Rock, “It is part of the Divine Plan. They would not be if there were not a reason for their being. But with the reason you and I have not to concern ourselves.” But the Tree had outgrown the Rock and outlived that answer. The outgrowing of anything means much, but the outliving of anything means more. We close a door behind us when we

outgrow, — we open one before us when we outlive. “I want to know the Reason of Myself and all that I see and all that I have ever seen!” whispered the Tree, sending its prayer strongly upward, winged with the hope that never yet fell back despairing.

God heard!

Each time that the wind came from the Brocken now it brought a Lesson in Learning. When the wind grew feeble in summer’s heat the Life of the Forest preached aloud to the Tree. When summer faded, the Fulness of all Things drew the conclusions together. The Tree was so humble, so glad to learn how to begin to learn, so anxious to learn aright. The great rift in its heart was ever widening but it knew now that that heart was rapidly finishing its meaning and would matter for only a little longer. A wonderful pale mist formed not of earth but of heaven began to float through its leaves at night, and although at first the Tree viewed it with awe, later it began to understand that it was part of its Very Own Being, and then later yet it suddenly realized, that It — the Wonder of Light — of Love — *was* its Being — was its Very Own True Self. It trembled then, it quivered with the light that had so mysteriously become its. “For I have always lived,” it thought quite suddenly and with great joy, “I have always lived. I lived in the acorn and before the acorn. I am a

Forever myself. And I have always Loved," it reflected, with another great bursting in of light, "I live because I love, I live so that I may love. It was Life that drew me forth to the world of sun and air. It was Love that wept and cried within me over the tortured Moving Things. It was Life that hugged me close to the Overhanging Rock and bade me ask questions. It was Love that let me hold the Rock close in my roots ever since. Oh, I know now the Secret. I know now the Reason."

Its glorious Radiance moved softly to and fro. The worn old trunk was riving with the ever-deepening cleft and the Spirit hovered close to it, bound by the earth-link of their mutual growth. The Forester and his assistant were standing below and the Forester held a sharp, shining instrument in his hand. The Spirit watched him. It smiled. It guessed. It knew.

"This tree may split and fall at any moment," said the Forester, "we must band it in iron."

The Tree-Spirit heard that with fright. Band it with iron to that poor split trunk indefinitely! What a horror! It wanted to be free. It was the last cry of earth limitations.

And then it realized instantly that it was free, — that no bands or bonds could hold its radiance longer. Ever so lightly it touched the assistant's young heart with its own omniscient wisdom.

"I think that it had better come down," he said

sturdily; "it's dead at the top. And the young trees need the room."

The Spirit smiled. The youth had comprehended.

"Well, I think you're right," said the Forester, and he lifted his little, sharp hook and marked the tree with a shining white gash. The next day the woodcutters came.

The Spirit watched happily while its old, worn-out body was felled. It saw the lumber of which homes are built, it saw the fires where little children gather to watch the baby's sweet pink feet toasted at bedtime. When the woodsmen went home to dinner two ladies and a little girl and a black poodle came strolling out of the forest on their way home to *their* dinner.

"Oh, they've been and cut down the old tree," the little girl exclaimed, and she ran and scrambled over the prostrate trunk with the poodle scrambling after her.

"What a pity!" said her mother; "why, it must have been hundreds and hundreds of years old."

"Ah, but only think how tired it must have been!" said the other lady, who had a sweet, pale little face, and was all in black. "I should think that it would be very glad to lie quietly down to rest."

The beautiful Tree-Spirit, standing close beside them, smiled afresh at that. It was gathering a strength divine each second now and the Purpose

which had once burst forth towards sun and air was now swelling towards Heaven in another way.

"It must have seen the castle in its days of power," said the mother; "fancy all the history that it knows," she said turning to the child with a smile.

"I suppose it learned until it just could n't learn any more," said the child, with a sort of sympathy for the poor tree in her tone.

"And then when there was nothing left for it to learn, it went," said the lady in black, with her touching smile. "Life is like that."

Life is like that!

The Spirit heard and smiled too.

"Life is like that," it said. "Life is like that. That is the Reason of all things. To learn — and then pass on. I have learned. Now I pass on."

And with the realization it passed on.

The Moon was full that night. It looked on the old, old tree trunk lying prostrate on the ground. The oldest trees are only Moving Things to the Moon. And the Moon herself is but a Moving Thing to God.

But that Silver Radiance that had entered His Kingdom that day — that was no Moving Thing. That was the Reason — the Reason of all — The Reason for all. The Reason we all seek — and seeking, find.



100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

New Edition with Pictures from the Play

THE REJUVENATION OF AUNT MARY

By ANNE WARNER

Author of "Susan Clegg and Her Friend Mrs. Lathrop,"

"A Woman's Will," etc.

Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth. \$1.50

Always amusing and ends in a burst of sunshine.—*Philadelphia Ledger*.

Impossible to read without laughing. A sparkling, hilarious tale.—*Chicago Record-Herald*.

The love story is as wholesome and satisfactory as the fun. In its class this book must be accorded the first place.—*Baltimore Sun*.

The humor is simply delicious.—*Albany Times-Union*.

Every one that remembers Susan Clegg will wish also to make the acquaintance of Aunt Mary. Her "imperious will and impervious eardrums" furnish matter for uproarious merriment. . . . A book to drive away the blues and make one well content with the worst weather.—*Pittsburg Gazette*.

Cheerful, crisp, and bright. The comedy is sweetened by a satisfying love tale.—*Boston Herald*.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

34 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

Anne Warner's "Susan Clegg" Books

SUSAN CLEGG AND HER FRIEND MRS. LATHROP

By ANNE WARNER

With Frontispiece, \$1.00

Nothing better in the new homely philosophy style of fiction has been written. — *San Francisco Bulletin*.

One of the most genuinely humorous books ever written. — *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.

Anything more humorous than the Susan Clegg stories would be hard to find. — *The Critic*, New York.

By the Same Author :

SUSAN CLEGG AND HER NEIGHBORS' AFFAIRS

With Frontispiece, \$1.00

All the stories brim over with quaint humor, caustic sarcasm, and concealed contempt for male and matrimonial chains. — *Philadelphia Ledger*.

SUSAN CLEGG AND A MAN IN THE HOUSE

Illustrated by ALICE BARBER STEPHENS. \$1.50

Susan is a positive joy, and the reading world owes Anne Warner a vote of thanks for her contribution to the list of American humor. — *New York Times*.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

34 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

Anne Warner's Latest Character Creation

IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY

By ANNE WARNER

Illustrated by J. V. McFall. Cloth. \$1.50

A story of love and sacrifice that teems with the author's original humor. — *Baltimore American*.

A story of unusual merit, but which is oddly compounded of amusing studies of human nature in a rural community and a romantic tragedy of the most exalted type. — *San Francisco Chronicle*.

To the colloquially eccentric and amusing company of "Susan Clegg" and "Aunt Mary" this book adds "Mrs. Ray," a character as distinctive and quaint as her predecessors. — *Chicago Evening Post*.

Likely to be as successful as her ever popular "Rejuvenation of Aunt Mary," of which several large editions have been demanded. . . . Mrs. Ray is perhaps the most delicious creation Anne Warner has thus far produced. — *Washington Herald*.

The best, as it is the most sustained work we have had from this author as yet. — *Detroit Free Press*.

The humor peculiar to her pen is here in wonted strength, but in a new guise; and set against it, or interwoven with it, is a story of love and the strange sacrifice of which a few loving hearts are capable. — *New York American*.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

34 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

An exceedingly clever volume of stories

AN ORIGINAL GENTLEMAN

By ANNE WARNER

With frontispiece by Alice Barber Stephens

Cloth. \$1.50

Exhibits her cleverness and sense of humor. — *New York Times*.

Crisply told, quaintly humorous. — *Boston Transcript*.

An "Original Gentleman" is truly also one of the most entertaining and witty gentlemen that it has been our fortune to run across in many a day, not to mention the more original lady that he has to do with. — *Louisville Evening Post*.

By the same author

A WOMAN'S WILL

Illustrated. 360 pages. Cloth. \$1.50

A deliciously funny book. — *Chicago Tribune*.

It is bright, charming, and intense as it describes the wooing of a young American widow on the European Continent by a German musical genius. — *San Francisco Chronicle*.

As refreshing a bit of fiction as one often finds. — *Providence Journal*.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

34 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

11

11

